

**THE ELUSIVE GOAL OF IMPROVING AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION:  
THE ROLES OF FEDERALISM TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores all three levels of government with particular emphasis on addressing racial equality, efficient spending, and empowerment at the local level. It is of the utmost importance to address the improvement of public education policy if the United States intends on preserving its democratic values. Each chapter analyzes specific policies and compares how these policies are best handled from federal to local governance. This assessment is conducted by reviewing existing literature and policies that contain second or third order of effects and outlier examples that emphasize legislative tendencies that appear to succeed when contrasted to ineffective legislation. Conclusions on each level of government provide final thoughts on whether or not historical policies are effective with supporting quantitative data. Additionally, the interpretation of policies within each level of government devise a roadmap for future policy suggestions and corrective actions that can achieve desired standards. Overall, this thesis asserts that while an easy solution does not exist for improving the academic success of K-12 students, progress can be attained within the United States if greater power is transferred to state and local governments. Decentralizing education cannot be tied to either side of the political spectrum; various Democrat and Republican Presidents have either advocated support or its dismantling.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."<sup>1</sup>

- Gerald Holton, Co-Author of *A Nation At Risk Report*

Education is a societal cornerstone that sustains orderly behavior among citizens. Desirable behavioral traits that can emanate from education include civic-mindedness, equity, and conscientiousness.<sup>2</sup> If societal norms begin to project these values as the moral framework that guides individual decision making, it is possible that societal reactions towards “current events” may shift dramatically. On January 6, 2021, American citizens conducted themselves with a “mob rule” mentality to dispute national election results. It is possible this reflects an *absence* of education purely based on demonstrated behavior.<sup>3</sup> Is the lack of a civically-educated populace indicative of the kind of threat our nation faces to preserve our democracy? If the preservation of democracy leads to orderly behavior by citizens, since it is dependent on the effectiveness of public education, then stronger efforts must be made to advance effective education policy.

Measuring the effects that education can have within a society extends beyond internal preservation. If American education were to continue to falter, unintended external consequences may include involuntary abdication as a global hegemony. Although the United States largely depends on military strength to sustain its role as a global hegemony, it is not immune to “near

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<sup>1</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform Report*. 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Saavedra, Anna R. "Academic Civic Mindedness and Model Citizenship in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme." RAND Education. Last modified April 2014.  
[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working\\_papers/WR1000/WR1044/RAND\\_WR1044.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/WR1000/WR1044/RAND_WR1044.pdf). 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Wamsley, Laurel. "What We Know So Far: A Timeline Of Security Response At The Capitol On Jan. 6." NPR.org. Last modified January 15, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/15/956842958/what-we-know-so-far-a-timeline-of-security-at-the-capitol-on-january-6>.

peer” adversaries vying for status as a global hegemon.<sup>4</sup> Preserving two key variables within the conception of a hegemony, military and economic strength, requires concentrated internal efforts towards advancing intellectual capabilities.<sup>5</sup> In short, the pursuit of early education must not wane as the United States progresses into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As John Adams eloquently stated, “Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people.”<sup>6</sup> Decentralizing public education by transferring federal power to local and state governments to improve public education performance is the focus of this thesis. Transferred power would allow local leaders to address performance shortcomings rather than having federal involvement under current education legislation (*Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015*). Fundamental to this task is determining the appropriate roles for each level of our government with adequately educating our citizens.

One of the pressing concerns within the United States that often goes unanswered is centered on how the United States can address its relatively “inadequate” public education system when compared to other “advanced industrial nations.”<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, it would not be possible nor feasible to conduct and report on research pertaining to every single possibility that may or may not negatively impact the progression of American students; the results would be endless. The overarching intent of this thesis and the research conducted is to dissect individual policies along with local district operating procedures to identify strengths and weaknesses within the realm of racial equality, spending, and empowerment. Ideally, capitalizing on identified “strong areas” with respect to policy development stemming from state and local agencies while minimizing

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<sup>4</sup> Webb, Michael C., and Stephen D. Krasner. "Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment." *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 183-98. Accessed February 4, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097178>>.

<sup>5</sup> Skerrett, Leon. "Reconceptualizing Hegemony in a Global American Century." *Journal of Global Faultlines* 6, no. 2 (2019): 150-65. Accessed February 3, 2021. doi:10.13169/jglobfaul.6.2.0150. 157-158.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, John. *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, 1765.

<sup>7</sup> Desilver, Drew. "U.S. Academic Achievement Lags That of Many Other Countries." Pew Research Center. Last modified May 30, 2020. <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/>>.



“ineffective” or “outdated” measures spearheaded by the federal government which fail to promote intellectual advancement is the underlying goal of this thesis. It is expected that the research shall illustrate learning points about specific policies and the recommendations that should follow. The case studies are intended to assist with learning more about the public education system and its various (yet specific) shortcomings.

### *Thesis Development*

Although the introduction of this thesis provides simplified “worst-case” internal and external scenarios, the remainder of this paper addresses the roles of federal, state, and local governments with respect to education policy. Ultimately, it is argued that limiting federalism and promoting empowerment at the local level is the key to improving public education. Since each level of government contains differing degrees of influence on education policy, we can assess and recommend changes that arguably *streamlines* archaic or inefficient practices. The use of various case studies within each chapter of this thesis provide answers for the following questions: What are the long-term effects of racial inequality within public schools? How has antiquated policy deterred the progression of American education policy? What measures can be taken to reduce the lengthiness of bureaucratic processes that involve the Federal government? What actions are taken towards attaining efficient school spending? By contrasting the differences of each level of government with racial equality, efficient spending, and empowerment at the local level, this paper shall uncover recommendations that would ultimately improve American education policy.

Throughout the entirety of this thesis, several references are made towards improving the academic performance of American students. For all intents and purposes, “academic performance” refers, at times, to either the increasing number of high school graduates or to the average test

scores achieved through mandated government testing. Any divergence from these metrics are clearly annotated.

Another important consideration involves the transfer of power over education legislation among the federal and state governments. Case studies on policy provide greater insight regarding the benefits of decentralizing reactionary methods towards addressing declining academic performance. Ultimately, we can attribute, to a certain degree, that the success of students is largely dependent on how effective state and local governments can provide support within the academic careers of its students. The effectiveness of state and local governments is predominantly determined by policies predicated on efficiency and utility when determining the course of public education practices.

### *Complications Between Levels of Government*

As each level of government is assigned its own chapter, its historical responsibilities are briefly covered in the beginning of each chapter to provide a cursory examination prior to determining which responsibilities should be retained. As we have progressed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, lines of responsibility have evolved. The federal government is largely responsible for blanket policy measures that occasionally *extend* past a level of “acceptability” when attempting to distinguish lines of responsibility. This assertion is based on the primary responsibility local and state governments uphold when administering public education. It is a responsibility written within most state constitutions along with the ensuing financial responsibility that burdens both local districts and its corresponding state. The U.S. Constitution, however, does not mention education. This inevitably leads to a complicated relationship when distinguishing the influence exhibited within each level of government. To simplify these matters, the federal government should allow individual states and corresponding localities to manage their own education programs. This concept was much more

prevalent during the infancy of the United States. Nonetheless, the outcome of various education policies, such as the recent *Every Student Succeeds Act* (commonly known as Public Law No. 114-95)<sup>8</sup>, is directly linked to one or more of the three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Another example includes the controversial *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*<sup>9</sup> (NCLB) (Public Law No. 107-110) and its illustration of the centralized role enforced by the federal government.<sup>10</sup> This Act was passed with bipartisan support with immense backing from the legislative and executive branches.<sup>11</sup> Historically, the federal government has set precedents that largely affect state government policy. Certain precedents set by the judicial branch include the results of landmark Supreme Court cases, such as *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>12</sup> and *Tinker v. Des Moines*.<sup>13</sup> These cases were deemed “landmark” in nature based on the precedents that were set. *Brown v. Board of Education* determined that “separate but equal educational facilities for racial minorities is inherently unequal, violating the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.”<sup>14</sup> *Tinker v. Des Moines* ensured the right of free speech of students within public schools.<sup>15</sup>

When these types of cases have set standards that were expected to be exercised in all 50 states, occasional pushback occurs. For example, following the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (347 U.S. 483)<sup>16</sup>, the state of Alabama altered its legislation in 1956 to eliminate “the state’s responsibility to guarantee public education.”<sup>17</sup> This decision was intended to promote

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<sup>8</sup> Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub Law 114-95, S. 1177, 114th Cong. (2015).

<sup>9</sup> No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425. 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Fuller, Bruce, Joseph Wright, Kathryn Gesicki, and Erin Kang. "Gauging Growth: How to Judge No Child Left Behind?" *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 5 (2007): 268-78. Accessed February 3, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30137913>>. 268.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>12</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294. 1954.

<sup>13</sup> *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503. 1968.

<sup>14</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294. 1954.

<sup>15</sup> *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503. 1968.

<sup>16</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294. 1954.

<sup>17</sup> EJI. "School Segregation in Alabama." Equal Justice Initiative. Last modified February 28, 2019. <<https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-school-segregation-in-alabama/#:~:text=Board%20of%20Education%20struck%20down,responsibility%20to%20guarantee%20public%20education>>.

support for continued segregation among public schools.<sup>18</sup> Occasionally, it appears that states have outright refused federal mandates by responding with lawsuits or internal policy changes.

Speculation can arise about how federal involvement would have unfolded in the ensuing decades if Alabama had enforced federal mandates during the 1950s.

Although some states continue to operate based on antiquated policies from decades prior, other states have observed astonishing performance shifts based by updating their education policies. States tend to view public education with varying degrees of importance and often respond to federal mandates with largely divergent responses. The willingness to adapt and update policy at the state level is largely reflected based on state rankings based on data published through the National Center for Education Statistics. Part of these results can be attributed to individuals holding the position of *Superintendent of Schools*. This position is determined through either an election or as an appointee by an individual state's governor. It is primarily responsible for coordinating and overseeing public elementary and secondary schools within individual states. Other unpredictable variables include sources of funding that support state education budgets, and distinguishing characteristics that are often exclusive to individual states. These characteristics may include anything from the number of non-native English speakers to containing citizens with greater than average depression rates. It is largely expected that these types of unique characteristics often affect the performance of students.

The government within local communities tends to have varying types of effects on students within its school districts. Support from the local community can largely influence the performance of individual schools based on the willingness to define objectives and develop plans to achieve district goals. This may reflect the degree in which a community values education. One of the larger and more prominent issues that arguably plagues the success of local districts stems from the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

inability of local leadership to create, develop, and execute solutions for internal problems. Certain federal policies have often undermined the capability of district faculty and often indicate an unwillingness to include feedback from educators or other relevant school employees. Failing to empower community leaders with the ability to devise solutions often prolongs the perception that education policy is largely influenced by a centralized source. Much of these findings are detailed within the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*.<sup>19</sup> Further, generalizations can be examined about inequity and exclusions within local communities.

### *Potential Effects of Federally Guided Education Policy*

Addressing public education and its continuation well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a pressing matter that shall determine the future course of the United States. The federal government has continuously failed at improving public education systems based on the correlation of tripled spending per pupil and the lack of relative academic progression between 1965 to 2002.<sup>20</sup> This equates to federal spending within the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* reaching \$2B in 1966 and exceeding \$25B in 2005 under *No Child Left Behind*.<sup>21</sup> Rather than addressing wasteful education programs and expenditures, the federal government has continued to pass ineffective and expensive legislation that continues to result with stagnated progression among students. An in-depth examination of student progression shall be examined in the ensuing chapters. Efforts must be made towards minimizing the federal education footprint and its costly yet ineffective endeavors. If the federal government continues to spend without measurable results, the American taxpayers and students will suffer the brunt of the effects from inefficient legislation. Another example includes

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<sup>19</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform Report*. 1983.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. DOE. "Charts-- 10 Facts About K-12 Education Funding." U.S. Department of Education. Accessed March 9, 2021. <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/edlite-chart.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

the detrimental effects of Common Core standards which were adopted by most states. It can be described as a “failed” attempt at catapulting student achievement. Initially released in 2010, the state of New York observed an extreme plummeting of test scores along with critiques from parents.<sup>22</sup> It was reported in New York City that only 26% of third through eighth grade students passed English and only 30% of students passed math.<sup>23</sup> One year prior to full Common Core implementation, the corresponding pass rates were 47% for English and 60% for math.<sup>24</sup> In 2014, other states removed themselves from Common Core and initiated legislation to replace standards in the following years. Although states were proactive at changing education curriculum rather “quickly”, it may have been more efficient if local districts had greater power with influencing the expeditious switch from Common Core. Testing new programs beforehand rather than using American students as “guinea pigs” for curriculum development should have prevented declined performance.

Developing and testing new curriculum standards is an especially important concept as it is necessary to ensure the future well-being of our nation and its citizens. More importantly is the preservation of democracy. In the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”<sup>25</sup> Safeguarding democracy and preserving the intent of our founding fathers is likely to be most achievable by placing greater emphasis on identifying necessary changes in policy, and responding carefully before finalizing legislative decisions.

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<sup>22</sup> Garland, Sarah. "The Man Behind Common Core Math." NPR.org. Last modified December 29, 2014. <<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/12/29/371918272/the-man-behind-common-core-math>>.

<sup>23</sup> Hernández, Javier C., and Robert Gebeloff. "Test Scores Sink As New York Adopts Tougher Benchmarks (Published 2013)." The New York Times. Last modified August 8, 2013. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/08/nyregion/under-new-standards-students-see-sharp-decline-in-test-scores.html>>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin D. "The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum." Roosevelt Institute. Last modified October 13, 2020. <<https://rooseveltinstitute.org/fdr-library/>>.

### *Case Studies*

The next chapter of this thesis examines the federal government by exploring three case studies supported by three streams of thought: democratic preservation, nationalism, and civil rights. Most examinations of past policy spearheaded by the federal government typically reflect the pursuit of these core ideologies. Additionally, these ideals tend to shift based on whomever was the sitting President along with a degree of dependency stemming from “current events” from various points in history. As an example, the competitive spirit of the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century space race against the Soviet Union was largely attributable to the passage of the *National Defense Education Act*.<sup>26</sup> The three case studies utilized during this chapter divide federal policy into three categories based on historical eras. This includes the colonial and federal era, 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The timeline of federal policy was broken down into these three periods primarily because of the profound differences that existed. It is obvious that the interests of the United States and its leadership contained durable shifts throughout the history of American politics. This becomes more evident as the Supreme Court became more involved with influencing the direction of education policy during the 1950s.

Upon the conclusion of the second chapter, the third chapter begins to explore the individual responsibilities given to states when determining how education policy shall be carried out. To further understand the linkages that exist among state governments and its students, three case studies are utilized. This includes state policy, sources of state funding, and regional variables. Upon the completion of the case study analysis, recommendations are devised to provide supporting evidence that improves state policy, efficient spending, and addressing concerns pertaining to the existence of regional variables. It should be noted that not every possible concern can be reviewed

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<sup>26</sup> Harris, Mary M., and James R. Miller. "Needed: Reincarnation of National Defense Education Act of 1958." *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 14, no. 2 (2005): 157-71. Accessed February 3, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40188675>>. 158.

nor addressed. The intent of this section is to provide more of a cursory examination of pressing issues that tend to undermine the capability of an individual state. It also exemplifies the importance of decentralizing education policy by asserting examples that demonstrate why the federal government should have less power when passing education legislation. It can be argued that state governments are much more likely to understand and address the needs of its citizens when compared to the federal government.

The local governments, which tend to be closest to the individual, is analyzed during the fourth chapter. Despite the inability of the local government to have a larger impact on blanket policies that may be employed by the federal or state government, it holds an important role with how policy is received and interpreted. The ability of a school district to succeed based on the support it receives from the local community is highlighted through the three case studies explored. These case studies include two of the top performing districts in the nation, along with one of the poorer performing districts. Top performing districts exude various resources that identify why academic success is continuously attained. Often, districts of high caliber contain well-crafted plans that detail how students receive support and the mechanisms that exist to prevent declining performance among “at-risk” students. Conversely, districts that underperform without having funding limitations often contain a less-structured approach in conjunction with obstacles that make teaching difficult. This can include language barriers or isolation from larger populations of people. Nonetheless, no two districts are alike nor does this chapter provide a comprehensive view of U.S. school districts altogether. It merely underlines outlier characteristics that appear to facilitate both success and failure. It also delves slightly into the funding portion of school districts and the relationship shared with state governments when developing operating budgets.



### *Alternative Approaches and Solutions*

Several historical approaches to education policy are assessed to establish differences in practices that were perceived to help students. One specific approach that dominated the structure of education during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an attempt at improving performance through “economies of scale and specialization”. Another approach was exercised through the passage of NCLB and the consideration that centralized approaches towards creating and upholding standards would lead to student success. Lastly, an alternative approach is that the use of a voucher system may serve as a stronger option by giving parents the ability to dictate how education is provided to their dependents. Despite this possibility, many states have yet to implement policies that authorize the use of vouchers. Research within these types of approaches often result with unexpected outcomes that signify the necessity of customized approaches when dealing with larger numbers of students.

### *Expected Outcomes*

There is no simple solution that will guarantee the desired results for education policy and this paper does not claim that any of the recommendations given will satisfy the waning decline outlined from *A Nation at Risk*. State and local governments chiefly share the responsibility for the education and academic achievement of its citizens. As a result, states and local governments must begin to uphold a greater role with responsibility to its citizens by providing the best public education systems available. This is a difficult task because the federal government tends to radiate its power and influence over all 50 states with blanket legislation. Nevertheless, local district leadership must be enabled to address the needs of its students along with expanding its involvement among local communities. Involvement is not a costly pursuit nor does it place an undue burden on school districts or local citizens. The underlying question remains-- is this a feasible expectation to pursue?

## CHAPTER 2

### EDUCATIONAL FEDERALISM

#### Introduction

The relative infancy of the United States prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century did not deter Founding Fathers from addressing education policy. Before federal organized efforts began to gain momentum, however, educational development was decentralized. Local communities exercised power to self-govern education among the local population.<sup>27</sup> As the federal government's role began to expand through increased regulatory measures and standardized curriculum standards, individual states experienced varying degrees of success.<sup>28</sup> Within the past two decades, the effects of the federal government have been negative partly due to the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). This chapter examines the development of the federal government's education policy and how this has affected student performance in both historical and contemporary settings. This chapter uses an analysis of education legislation to focus on how the federal government created nation-wide educational policy.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education claims that its primary mission is to: “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellent and ensuring equal access.”<sup>29</sup> It carries out this mission by providing leadership throughout national dialogue on how to improve the results for the education system that incorporates all

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<sup>27</sup> McGuinn, Patrick. "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 77-94. Accessed February 5, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.04.

<sup>28</sup> Snyder, Thomas D, and National Center for Education Statistics. 120 Years of American Education: a Statistical Portrait. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> USOE. "Federal Role in Education." *US Department of Education (ED)*, May 25, 2017. <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>>.

students.<sup>30</sup> It also includes the dissemination of the latest discoveries on strategies that work within the learning and teaching process.<sup>31</sup>

One crucial aspect about educational federalism is the continuous shift in goals beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Based on these changing trends, federally mandated legislation has affected students in varying ways within the United States. As a result, what types of policies have been implemented throughout each century and how has it evolved from its original form? Has legislation predicated on decentralization affected students more positively when power is given to state governments? This chapter does not attempt to provide an analysis for every single decision made by the federal government, nor does it intend to make such claims. Rather, the overarching intent is to provide a greater emphasis on educational federalism and how these changes have impacted students within the United States. Before addressing these questions, the role of the federal government and its place within the US Education system is explored.

### **Factors of Educational Federalism**

Legislative change appears to be driven by a multitude of internal and external factors. Internal factors include domestic issues that require federal intervention to address situations among the American people. Particular examples include an array of legislative measures used to tackle anything from the preservation of democracy to improving civil rights. External factors pertain to the influence or growth of foreign rivals such as the United States and Soviet Union space race of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The nature of the previous relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union creates the argument for nationalism influenced by an external factor. Based on the intent of legislation passed to address these issues, motivating considerations appear to stem from democratic

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

preservation, nationalism, and civil rights. These three considerations may not cover every single aspect that influences educational federalism; however, the majority of laws passed at the federal level can be associated with these factors.

### *Democratic Preservation*

A strong relationship exists among education, political and civic knowledge, and action. This relationship requires a robust education system to positively develop the academic trajectory of students in the United States.<sup>32</sup> A healthy democracy is not sustainable if the public education system falters.<sup>33</sup> This can lead to academic inadequacies that fails to prepare students to fully comprehend and understand information associated with the development of policy.<sup>34</sup> Failing to provide an education to students places great responsibility on the federal and state governments for the proper dissemination of the tools needed to educate the continually growing number of students.

The effectiveness of choices available for academic instruction is debatable. Presently, the most commonly utilized options include: public, private, and homeschooling.<sup>35</sup> As schooling in the private sector tends to improve the opportunities for at-risk students over public schools,<sup>36</sup> it may be worth noting that private schools can serve public interest concerns more efficiently than other conventional options. Ultimately, these specific options need to be chosen based on obstacles that need to be addressed. One obstacle is assisting the 47% of students classified as “at-risk”.<sup>37</sup> Failure to address this percentage of students can manifest the continuation of issues that threaten the preservation of democracy. Mitigating a student’s performance deemed “at-risk”, may be solved

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<sup>32</sup> Fusarelli, Bonnie C., and Tamara V. Young. "Preserving the 'Public' in Public Education for the Sake of Democracy." *Journal of Thought* 46, no. 1-2 (2011): 85-96. Accessed March 21, 2020. doi:10.2307/jthought.46.1-2.85.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 89

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>37</sup> Office of the State Superintendent of Education. “Data and Reports.” Accessed April 22, 2020. <<https://osse.dc.gov/page/data-and-reports-0>>.

through the use of school vouchers for parents with students enrolled at “failing schools”. As of 2017, only 15 states are offering a school voucher program.<sup>38</sup>

The population of “at-risk” students will likely dwindle if they can receive specialized attention that is deemed to be “more available” at private schools.<sup>39</sup> Public schools have historically served “at-risk” students least effectively when compared to other available options.<sup>40</sup> Studies indicate that students educated through private schools “do not score lower than, and in some instances score higher than students who attend or graduated from public schools on attitudes commonly associated with sustaining a democracy.”<sup>41</sup> These attitudes include: “voluntary service, civic participation, tolerance of minority groups, knowledge of the U.S. constitutional processes and rights, voter participation, and commitment to freedom of speech.”<sup>42</sup> This asserts that students from private schools typically exhibit higher levels of political participation with organizations that promote the growth of democracy.<sup>43</sup> Based on these assertions, failing to help “at-risk” students may lead to disenfranchised students becoming disenfranchised adults. Under this presumption, disenfranchised adults may demonstrate a lower likelihood of participation when it comes to volunteering, voting, and sustaining the intent of democracy with the involvement exercised by civic action.<sup>44</sup> The purpose for bringing up the benefits of “private schools” is purely to describe options that can assist “at risk” students and not to undermine the nature of public education systems.

Enacting the same type of employment services from privatized companies can reduce the burden placed upon these public education systems while effectively improving the organization’s

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<sup>38</sup> NCES - State Education Reforms. "States with Voucher Programs, by State: 2017." Last modified 2017. <[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab4\\_7.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab4_7.asp)>.

<sup>39</sup> Fusarelli, Bonnie C., and Tamara V. Young. "Preserving the “Public” in Public Education for the Sake of Democracy." *Journal of Thought* 46, no. 1-2 (2011): 85-96. Accessed March 21, 2020. doi:10.2307/jthought.46.1-2.85. 91.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 90.

performance. Contracted educators or tutors employed at public schools may lead to improving the academic performance of students. Because there is such a heavy reliance on the private sector to aid organizations that serve the public, the education system in the United States should not forgo such opportunities. Ultimately, if student performance is a limiting factor in the pursuit of democratic values and ideologies, privatizing parts of education may enhance the preservation of democracy.

Other concerns that arise from inequalities in the pursuit of education stem from inequality in social status and income distribution. For example, failure to bridge the gap between income distribution and social status inevitably leads to disparities with having the capability to influence the direction of politics.<sup>45</sup> Trends of this nature weaken the democratic structure of the United States based on the presumption that wealthier citizens with more significant influence on American politics will be in a position to “exercise undue political influence”.<sup>46</sup> To prevent the spread of inequalities between social classes, it becomes paramount for the federal government to intervene with providing educational opportunities to all classes of American citizens.

### *Nationalism*

Nationalism plays an essential role in shaping the social context of how Americans view education.<sup>47</sup> If academic scholarship is the result of social context, an argument exists that it is “ideological” in nature and “historically contingent”.<sup>48</sup> If the ideological nature of academics in the United States predisposes students towards developing and maintaining a nationalist stance towards academic advancement, it becomes inevitable (and obvious) that ensuing academic principles will

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>47</sup> Hedrick, Charles W. "The American Ephebe: The Ephebic Oath, U.S. Education, and Nationalism." *The Classical World* 97, no. 4 (2004): 384-407. Accessed March 20, 2020. doi:10.2307/4352874. 385.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 385.

affect the future of educational federalism. One specific article that discusses the nature of US education and nationalism is titled, *The American Ephebe: The Ephebic Oath, U.S. Education, and Nationalism*.

Based on interpretations stemming from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens, the term *ephebe* was translated to *cadet* as all citizens were required to join the *ephebeia*.<sup>49</sup> The ties between the ephebeia and American education are traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the work of John H. Finley Sr.<sup>50</sup> Finley's contributions can be extracted from a series of his speeches titled, *Sons of the City*. He claims that "the graduates have been educated for democratic purposes", and that "education does the nationalist work of consolidating and homogenizing immigrants."<sup>51</sup> Greek sources influenced Finley's assertions about the role of education and its ability to transform anyone from any walk of life. Based on traditional speeches given at an ephebe's departure from service, Finley deemed it appropriate to administer a similar speech at a university commencement ceremony.<sup>52</sup>

Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American scholars presented their own experiences relating to higher education onto the ephebeia and continued to assert an association with patriotic nationalism.<sup>53</sup> This idea was a continuation of ideals exercised within the historical context of the Athenian ephebeia.<sup>54</sup> Applying Finley's idea, he believed that "the problem of democracy is a problem of education. Its perpetuity rests on education. In a democracy the supreme function of the state is to take the children and youth of each generation and develop them into men and women able to fulfill the responsibility and enjoy the opportunity of free citizenship in a free society".<sup>55</sup> The nature of these early 20<sup>th</sup> century views defined the legislation throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>55</sup> NYPL/FP, Box 122, #523 (syllabus in civics and patriotism)

century. Legislation characterized as “nationalistic” would later have a profound impact on the outcome of future American students.

Compared to the education systems in other nations, the federal government of the United States has not taken a direct lead with influencing higher education.<sup>56</sup> Typically, the majority of changes introduced at the state level are dispersed through much more subtle methods that involved the distribution or withholding of education funds. Nonetheless, the standardized nature of culture and language are disseminated at the federal level and are later instructed to students accordingly. When it comes to the discussion of nationalism, the federal government serves to create an “authoritative body of knowledge” that supports the objectives of the United States. One example that illustrates this relationship can be derived from the landmark Supreme Court Case, *Tinker v. Des Moines Community Independent School District*.

During the 1960s, students attending Des Moines Independent Community School District began wearing black armbands to protest the war in Vietnam. The subject of the case occurred during a ten-day period in December of 1965 and led to the suspension of five students for violating the school’s policy. The Supreme Court eventually ruled in favor of the students as school officials “sought to punish [the students] for a silent, passive expression of opinion, unaccompanied by any disorder or disturbance. . . .”<sup>57</sup> This landmark case was nonviolent and “tame” when compared to other demonstrations of the 1960s.<sup>58</sup> This case remains pertinent towards identifying the willingness of Supreme Court involvement when dealing with education policy.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>57</sup> Action, Patricia N. The American Journal of Legal History 42, no. 3 (1998): 341-42. Accessed February 4, 2021. doi:10.2307/846210. 342.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 341.



## *Civil Rights*

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American citizens across the United States continued working towards dismantling the inequalities observed in public education, and the unequal society that resulted from Jim Crow laws.<sup>59</sup> Civil rights activists reacted by addressing political, economic, and educational systems through the use of boycotts, lawsuits, negotiations, protests, and political campaigning.<sup>60</sup>

The federal government's pursuit of civil rights during the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to transformational changes. As a result, this created an overhauled public education system. Based on a growing number of nonviolent protests and President Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to push civil rights as a high priority, the ensuing ratification of various laws focused on the promotion of civil rights in the educational arena.<sup>61</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* was paramount to addressing decades of educational inequalities for disenfranchised Americans.

Based on psychological and sociological evidence stemming from *Brown v. Board of Education*, advocates of Civil Rights were able to utilize scientific evidence to further cases that saw the Constitution violating civil rights' statutes.<sup>62</sup> This has effectively allowed advocates to demonstrate disparities in education by turning towards statistical evidence during desegregation litigation to represent such claims.<sup>63</sup> The widespread effects used to support civil rights has extended to other facets of the law; however, its usefulness has become embedded with creating plausible cases towards improving the situation for disenfranchised citizens seeking educational opportunities.

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<sup>59</sup> Grundy, Pamela. "In Color and Character: West Charlotte High and the American Struggle over Educational Equality", 33-58. *Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press*, 2017. Accessed March 21, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469634012\\_grundy.6](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469634012_grundy.6)>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>61</sup> Woods, Randall B. "The Politics of Idealism: Lyndon Johnson, Civil Rights, and Vietnam." *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 1 (2007): 1-18. Accessed March 21, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/24916017](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24916017)>.

<sup>62</sup> Ancheta, Angelo N. "Civil Rights, Education Research, and the Courts." *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 1 (2006): 26-29. Accessed March 22, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/3700032](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3700032)>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 26.

*Brown v. Board of Education* is examined in greater depth later in this chapter, however, it is important to note that it required the use of the National Guard to protect black students from ensuing riots.<sup>64</sup> This is merely one example that illustrates state and local governments resistant towards racial integration.

## **Methodology of Research**

### *Case Study Selection*

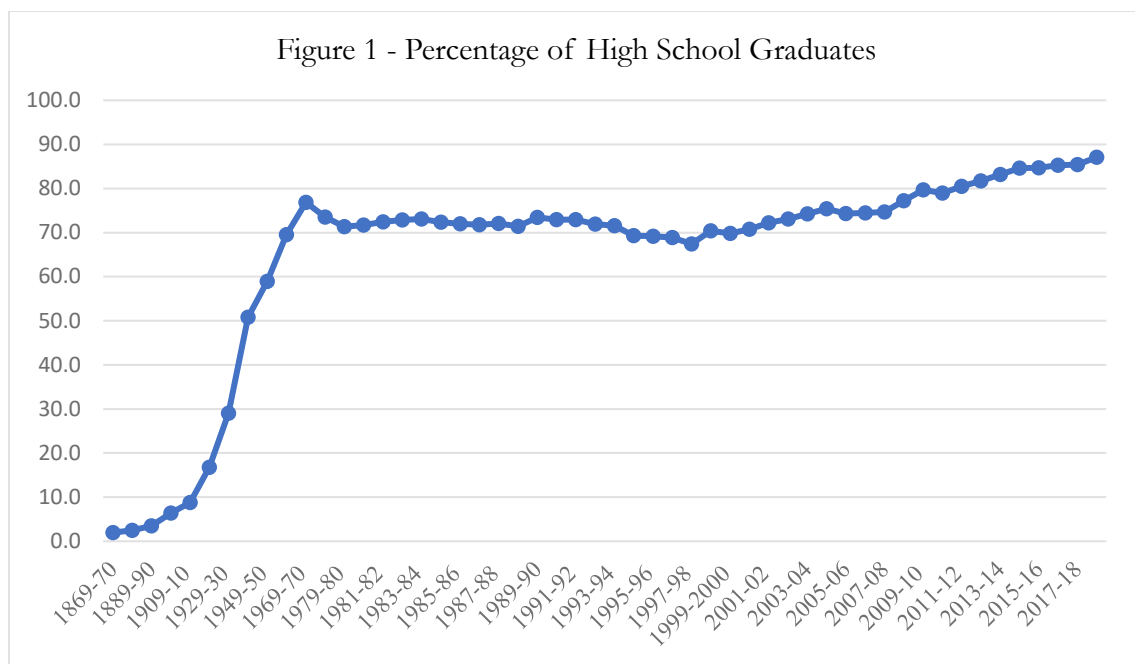
This chapter utilizes three case studies supplemented by relevant data to examine the research questions. The basis of the case studies utilized in this section rely on the examination of federal policy and how it affected the academic performance of American students. Specifically, high school graduation rates in addition to the rise of students pursuing higher education are emphasized. The data used for comparison was publicly released by the federal government. Furthermore, the use of case studies dissects the intricacies of government legislation by describing the rationale of policymakers throughout certain historical periods. These historical periods are defined by ‘era’ as: Colonial & Federal, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The use of charted data illustrates past trends that support how policy has continued to evolve. Additionally, the charted data in the first figure indicates durable shifts in history that led to substantial rises in student graduation rates. It also provides a reference that shows the effectiveness of legislation that has both enabled and denied the ability of state and local governments to manage public education efficiently. The culmination of benefits provided by the charts give significant reinforcement to the ideas extracted from individual case studies. As discussed during the literature review, policy within each era is analyzed for democratic preservation, nationalism, and civil rights.

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<sup>64</sup> Clark, Alexis. "Why Eisenhower Sent the 101st Airborne to Little Rock After Brown V. Board." *History*. Last modified April 8, 2020. <<https://www.history.com/news/little-rock-nine-brown-v-board-eisenhower-101-airborne>>.

Based on categorizing the motivation within educational federalism stemming from the three listed motivating factors, each case study section will attempt to associate performance to individual laws. Because of the author’s inability to research education statistics, this case study utilizes quantitative data based on published reports required by Congressional mandates.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, laws that may have decreased student academic performance are explored. Student performance is determined by standardized government testing, high school graduation rates, and the pursuit of higher education. Figure 1 show the percentage of high school graduates between 1869 and 2019.<sup>66</sup>



(Source: National Center for Education Statistics)

Figure 1 shows how high school graduation rates have fluctuated over time. Further examination of historical education policy is reflected by the increasing number of high school

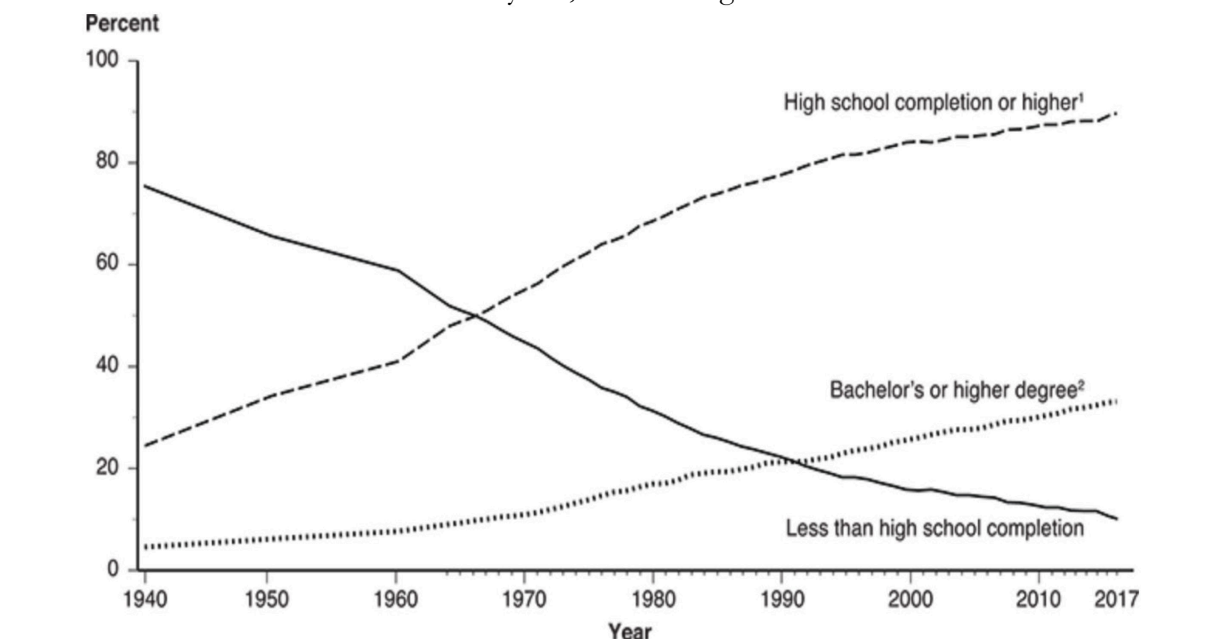
<sup>65</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. “About Us”. Accessed March 24, 2020.  
<<https://nces.ed.gov/about/>>.

<sup>66</sup> NCES. “Digest of Education Statistics, 2018.” *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education*. Accessed March 23, 2020.  
<[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_219.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_219.10.asp)>.

graduates between 1869 and 2018. From the data, we can see several trends. First, the period between 1970 and 2008, appeared to stagnate with fluctuations that hovered between 70% and 75% graduation rates. The periods before and after those specified years indicates relatively normal improvements with the 2018-2019 school year having the highest graduation rates in American public education history.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of Americans that attained a higher level of education between 1940 and 2017. The data illustrates positive changes with American public education beginning with progression starting during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 2 - Percentage of persons 25 years old and over, by highest level of educational attainment: Selected years, 1940 through 2017



(Source: National Center for Education Statistics)

The second figure is broken into three categories. The first category indicates the percentage of students completing high school. The second category indicates the number of students pursuing a Bachelor's Degree or higher. The third category indicates the decline of students receiving an education less than a high school diploma. To clarify, "high school completion or higher" is

referencing education beyond high school but less than the completion of a Bachelor's Degree (such as an Associate's Degree). It is important to identify the positive trend of American students graduating from high school along with the number of Americans seeking education beyond high school. It is presumed these positive trends result from improving legislative policy and the greater availability of education to American citizens.

In combination with the basic data provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2, an overview of historical laws on educational federalism provides a window into how various legislative efforts have impacted academic performance. When evaluating these historic, laws, however, global events, such as World War II, played an important role in shaping the graduation rates and the decision to go to college. Before World War II, the number of graduates were much lower, as potential students may have had to tend to other obligations, such as supporting family farms and businesses.<sup>67</sup> Despite the influence derived from external factors, it should still be feasible to draw conclusions based on policy development.

### **Case Study 1: Colonial & Federal Era**

#### *18<sup>th</sup> Century Laws*

Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the United States government began to take a proactive approach towards the future of American education. Two laws passed during the late-18<sup>th</sup> century included the Land Ordinance Act of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinances of 1787.<sup>68</sup> These laws connected the “drawing of property lines” with “the creation of schools.”<sup>69</sup> Once the United States

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<sup>67</sup> BLS. “History of child labor in the United States—part 2: the reform movement.” *Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)*, January, 2017. <<https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2017/article/history-of-child-labor-in-the-united-states-part-2-the-reform-movement.htm>>

<sup>68</sup> McGuinn, Patrick. "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 77-94. Accessed February 5, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.04.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

began to incorporate Ohio, it mandated guaranteed public education for admission into the Union.<sup>70</sup> This can be interpreted as an early sign that the United States initially wanted states to take the lead with public education systems. Years later, the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 committed federal support to funding land-grant colleges through the sale of federally-owned land.<sup>71</sup> It revolutionized higher education in the United States by giving aid to universities that supported technical and agricultural instruction.<sup>72</sup> Despite the enormous impact towards K-12 education provided by federalism during this early period in American history, the federal government refrained from public school management until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, was the formation of the U.S. Office of Education (USOE).<sup>74</sup>

### *U.S. Office of Education*

In 1867, the U.S. Office of Education was created “for the purpose of collecting such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several state and territories....”<sup>75</sup> Several disadvantages associated with the creation of USOE was the initial lack of resources and limited staff. Their first objective as an organization was to construct a statistical analysis on the early school system in the United States.<sup>76</sup> The original intent of USOE was to identify academic progression and promote education throughout the nation. Early opposition towards USOE was its ability to potentially disrupt established sovereignty.<sup>77</sup> Federal mandates within municipalities appears to be the reason for USOE’s initial instability since local governments

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>72</sup> Hedrick, Charles W. "The American Ephebe: The Ephebic Oath, U.S. Education, and Nationalism." *The Classical World* 97, no. 4 (2004): 384-407. Accessed March 20, 2020. doi:10.2307/4352874. 403.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 79.

controlled education at that time. Upon the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, the role of the federal government in education increased. This Act began the first annual appropriation of federal funding for K-12 grades for vocational education programs.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, the management of schools continued to be controlled by local governments.

## **Case Study 2: 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

### *U.S. Office of Education*

During the early 1930s, certain concerns developed based on the idea that the United States was shifting its stance towards education development similar to European counterparts.<sup>79</sup> During this decade, USOE was reorganized into five major divisions categories: administration, publications, research and investigation, library, and the service division.<sup>80</sup> In conjunction with Congress authorizing \$200,000 to conduct surveys over three-years to determine the education of teachers, the role of the Office of Education became more pronounced as a workable research organization.<sup>81</sup> Between the 1930's and 1970's, the education system in the United States underwent a largely transformational shift with the introduction of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).<sup>82</sup> For the sake of chronology, NDEA and ESEA will be addressed later in this chapter.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed The Department of Education Organization Act (P.L. 96-88), which created the modern-day Department of Education (DoED).<sup>83</sup> Despite several

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>79</sup> WM. John Cooper. "The Office of Education." *The Scientific Monthly* 36, no. 2 (1933): 121-30. Accessed March 12, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/15436](http://www.jstor.org/stable/15436)>. 121.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>82</sup> McGuinn, Patrick. "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 77-94. Accessed February 5, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.04. 80.

<sup>83</sup> Department of Education Organization Act, Public Law 96-88, U.S. Statutes at Large 93 Stat. 668 (1979): 5.

attempts by Ronald Reagan to disband the newly formed Department,<sup>84</sup> it continues to exist and became an important pillar with how education was viewed and developed during the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> It effectively combined numerous offices as it dedicated itself to creating and implementing policies regarding federal financial aid along with the distribution and monitoring of such funds.<sup>86</sup> The initial philosophy of how education included the importance of civil rights while transitioning towards new ideologies based on Reagan's presidency. These newer ideologies derived from "market-based provisions of services" and a "derisory view of the 'nanny state'".<sup>87</sup> Hundreds of legislative changes sought to enhance standards of American education between 1981 and 2000.<sup>88</sup>

In 1994, two important pieces of legislation included *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* and *Improving America's Schools Act*, which were enacted. At approximately the same time, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was the finalized product predicated on six proposals that would dictate the implementation of national standards determined in 1989. It was also a source of funding designed to incorporate these changes and increase the academic standards that would be achieved by standards defined as "National Educational Goals."<sup>89</sup> The *Improving America's Schools Act* was a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Act* that was passed in 1965 as it sought to reform a \$7B program. More importantly, it incorporated substantial changes that improved the quality of both teachers and students with additional resources to meet state testing standards.

Despite a rocky beginning, USOE's eventual transition into the DoED continues to provide relevant information on education strategies that assist policymakers and teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Bell, Terrel H. "Education Policy Development in the Reagan Administration." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 67, no. 7 (1986): 487-93. Accessed March 20, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/20403138](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20403138)>.

<sup>85</sup> Menéndez Weidman, Lisa K. "Policy Trends and Structural Divergence in Educational Governance: The Case of the French National Ministry and US Department of Education." *Oxford Review of Education* 27, no. 1 (2001): 75-84. Accessed March 10, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/1050994](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1050994)>. 80.

<sup>86</sup> ED. "Find. Apply. Succeed." *Grants.gov*. Accessed March 14, 2020. <<https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-making-agencies/departments-of-education.html>>.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 81.



century.<sup>90</sup> Within the history of DoED, however, lies an incredibly important legislative act known as the *National Defense Education Act* (NDEA).<sup>91</sup>

### *National Defense Education Act*

Upon the conclusion of the Second World War, concerns for educational equity began to foster a renewed approach towards intervention from the federal government. Shortly after, questions rose from the creation of the NDEA and how it would affect schools and pupils.<sup>92</sup> The NDEA was a transformative step towards bolstering the cultivation of academic prowess among students.

The premise of the NDEA sought to provide every American citizen with opportunities that would develop skills and capabilities which would cater towards preserving the leadership required for continued democracy.<sup>93</sup> With specific ties to education, the Title III section of the NDEA focused on providing stronger emphasis on language, history, mathematics, science, and a multitude of other subjects deemed essential for students between elementary and secondary schools. The authorization of federal loans and grants supplied equipment to enhance these specific subject areas.<sup>94</sup> Once the NDEA began implementation, schools would submit applications in the form of proposals which would specify the equipment required based on the subject area that needed improvement.<sup>95</sup> A wide array of technology was seemingly made available and eased the transition of education into a new era. The transformative shift in education policy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century drives

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<sup>90</sup> USOE. "Federal Role in Education." *US Department of Education (ED)*, May 25, 2017. <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>>.

<sup>91</sup> McGuinn, Patrick. "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 77-94. Accessed February 5, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.04. 80.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>93</sup> Piltz, Albert. "National Defense Education Act." *Science and Children* 2, no. 7 (1965): 9-10. Accessed March 6, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/43070693](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43070693)>.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

the question: why did the federal government decide to take a proactive approach towards educating students? What made educational equity such a motivating force?

Two conventional principles developed the foundation of federal aid. The first principle focused on aiding states that needed support. The second principle acknowledged the sovereignty within states that authorized self-contained educational systems.<sup>96</sup> These principles led to an advanced network of public schools while providing insight on how Americans perceived the advancement of Soviet space exploration capabilities. Upon *Sputnik* successfully entering orbit, a great deal of American pride suffered as a result.<sup>97</sup> The climate in which Americans found themselves based on the success of *Sputnik* led to a reexamination of American public education; thus leading to the beginning of the National Defense Education Act. The philosophical justification within the Act contends that “The Congress hereby finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women”.<sup>98</sup>

The threat that the Soviet Union would surpass the United States was deemed great enough for federal intervention to occur. Another important aspect about this Act was the prohibition that the federal government would have control over administration, curriculum, personnel, or instruction over a school system.<sup>99</sup> The intent of the act and its attempt to produce citizens that would rival Soviet achievements intended to reinvigorate the education process. Shortly after its ratification, another major component of education legislation was titled, “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965” (ESEA).

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<sup>96</sup> Flemming, Arthur S. "The Philosophy and Objectives of The National Defense Education Act." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 327 (1960): 132-38. Accessed March 6, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/1033973](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1033973)>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 135.

### *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*

Federal aid for educational pursuits nearly doubled after the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Part of the reason for its passage emphasized the principles of civil rights and equity for all American citizens.<sup>100</sup> It consisted of five different provisions based around poverty and how it affected a students' ability to receive an education. The division of funding based on these five titles included: pupil expenditures based on family income, development of library resources, grants for supplemental education centers, educational training and research facilities, and funding for individual state departments to further education.<sup>101</sup> Certain attributes incorporated with this Act include its classification as a *supplemental* source of funding. Local governments were still required to provide the same expected spending allocations in conjunction with federal aid. Furthermore, a great deal of ambiguity ensued with the determination of eligibility combined with the difficulty of tracking students by age, location, and family income.<sup>102</sup> Despite the intent of ESEA, certain elements within its development undermined its potential for fair and equal distribution. It is important to mitigate these concerns in future legislation.

One political roadblock during the passage of ESEA was the prohibition of diverting funds to segregated schools. Within Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, ESEA funds were not reaching segregated students which underlines the political conflict observed between politicians from northern and southern states.<sup>103</sup> Titled "A Political Case History: Passage of the ESEA" and authored by, James W. Guthrie, the extent in which ESEA managed to overcome roadblocks associated with the distribution of school aid.

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<sup>100</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. "ESSA Reauthorization: The Obama Administration's ESEA Reauthorization Priorities." *111th Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess.*, March 17, 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Osborne, Buckman. "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965." *The Clearing House* 40, no. 3 (1965): 190-92. Accessed March 7, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/30182931](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30182931)>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>103</sup> Guthrie, James W. "A Political Case History: Passage of the ESEA." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 49, no. 6 (1968): 302-06. Accessed February 20, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/20372068](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20372068)>. 302.

Collaborative efforts among government entities are essential to ratify legislation. The culmination of efforts exhibited by the executive, legislative, and judicial branch marks a historical transformation to expand desegregation based on the subsequent passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and ESEA.<sup>104</sup> Certain assertions found within the article present the idea that without the passage of the Civil Rights Act one year prior, ESEA would not be subjected to failing as did most legislation preceding its ratification. Essentially, the Civil Rights Act prohibited federal funding for recipients known from discrimination.<sup>105</sup>

### **Case Study 3: 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

#### *No Child Left Behind*

In early 2002, NCLB sought to continue and revise ESEA, however, it included a drastic number of changes. Primary features within NCLB included states imposing standard based assessments in math and reading, grants for states to development assessment criteria, required participation with the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, required yearly progress standards, goals that allow pupils to achieve proficient or advanced within 12 years, consequences for not meeting standards, increased targeting on poverty-stricken states based on ESEA Title I formula allocation, and many other changes requiring the restructuring of K-12 education programs.<sup>106</sup> The aggressive overhaul of education legislation appears to have had “good intentions”, however, various scholars have pointed out the areas in which it fell short. Nonetheless, this did not prevent President George W. Bush from defending NCLB as he asserted in 2018 that he

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<sup>104</sup> Frankenberg, Erica and Taylor, Kendra. "ESEA and the Civil Rights Act: An Interbranch Approach to Furthering Desegregation." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 32-49. Accessed February 10, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.02.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>106</sup> Olivert, Damian P. “No Child Left Behind Act: Text, Interpretation, and Changes.” *Hanppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers*, 2008. viii.

viewed it as, “one of the great pieces of civil rights legislation.”<sup>107</sup> Indeed, NCLB provided “an implied private right of action for limited English proficient advocates to sue states and school districts that do not comply with NCLB.”<sup>108</sup> Although the intent of NCLB was to protect largely minority students, these objectives fell short.

Despite its intentions, certain critics of NCLB tend to question the rationale behind the incredibly high standards it attempted to impose. Described as a “dramatic foray” into elementary and secondary policymaking, the risks associated creates a ripple effect of waves among federal and state lawmakers based on authority over education policy.<sup>109</sup> Authored by Michael Heise, the article, “From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: Back to a Future for Education Federalism”, provides an effective timeline behind the intricacies of federal legislation and its inevitable effects. The boundaries of education federalism were essentially uprooted under NCLB and pushed implications on all public K-12 schools regardless of whether Title I funding was received or not.<sup>110</sup> For the first time, President George W. Bush imposed a system of national accountability through annual testing and rewards based on performance.<sup>111</sup>

Approximately five years after the passage of NCLB, a commissioned group of scholars and relevant observers provided a preliminary judgement regarding “current” and future provisions for the future of elementary education. Rather than receiving the classification as a “definitive evaluation”, the intent was to investigate insights which used towards a redesign of education

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<sup>107</sup> Cavanagh, Sean. "George W. Bush Defends Legacy of No Child Left Behind." EdWeek Market Brief. Last modified April 20, 2018. <<https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/george-w-bush-defends-legacy-no-child-left-behind-education-business-conference/>>.

<sup>108</sup> Kihuen, Mariana. "Leaving No Child Behind: A Civil Right." American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law. 17, no. 1 (2009): 114.

<sup>109</sup> Heise, Michael. "From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: Back to a future for education federalism." *Columbia Law Review* 117, no. 7 (2017): 1859-896. Accessed February 1, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/44425412](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44425412)>. 1859.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 1866.

<sup>111</sup> Peterson, Paul E., and Martin R. West, eds. "No Child Left Behind?: The Politics and Practice of School Accountability." *Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press*, 2003. Accessed February 3, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctvb6v789](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctvb6v789)>. 81.

policy.<sup>112</sup> Certain conclusions include NCLB's removal of mechanisms and language embedded within standards-based education development and combined it with archaic policy goals driven by 1960's initiatives.<sup>113</sup> Dated equipment restrained its high aspirations along with "uncertain interventions" and "weak sanctions".<sup>114</sup> Regardless of the education policy changes observed during the Bush administration that oversaw the "No Child Left Behind Act", certain similarities remain that correlate ESEA and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

### *Every Student Succeeds Act*

Based on changes implemented under Title I-A, ESSA contains several amendments that creates greater emphasis on educational accountability contingent on the receipt of grants or funding approval.<sup>115</sup> Much of the negative attributes associated with the unrealistic expectations imposed by NCLB were perceived to be corrective after the passage of ESSA. As claimed by the President of the National Education Association, "a dark cloud was lifted in December, and there was a broad consensus that that was true among people who work with children in schools".<sup>116</sup> This newly founded perception was the result on the "guardrails" built around state accountability systems and the Secretary of Education. Five new rules within this relatively new legislation was the inability for the Secretary of Education to prohibit States on setting academic standards, evaluating State tests, identifying and improving poorly performing schools, teacher evaluation systems, and goals for student achievement along with graduation rates.<sup>117</sup> In essence, the lack of micro-managing observed

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<sup>112</sup> Hess, Frederick M., and Chester E. Finn. "No Remedy Left behind: Lessons from a Half-Decade of NCLB." *Washington, D.C.: AEI Press*, 2007. 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>115</sup> Skinner, Rebecca. "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): A Primer." *Congressional Research Service*. October (2019). Accessed February 21, 2020. <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45977.pdf>>.

<sup>116</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. "Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. ESSA Implementation: Perspectives from Education Stakeholders on Proposed Regulations." *114th Cong., 2nd sess.*, July 14, 2016. 1.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

in the past by the federal government was systematically removed by allowing individual states to address internal needs based on self-governance.

Student success has received a much broader definition given by states and local districts. Within the new law, a reference to “nonacademic” factors applied accountability variables which included school climate, safety, and student engagement.<sup>118</sup> Other important additions appear to address the cultivation of “well-rounded” pupils. One segment includes the recommendation of “safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement”.<sup>119</sup>

The largest transformation observed with ESSA was the shift of power from the federal government to state and local districts. It is difficult to understand how this will impact education in the coming years, however, it should appear obvious that states and local districts will have a stronger understanding of student needs within their regions. The introduction of ESSA appears to have much more positive effects on students than NCLB.

### **Analysis of Legislative Changes**

Comparing the data on student performance to the effects of individual laws contains gaps because Congressional studies did not begin until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The public education system in the United States has garnered a substantial increase in students with subsequent rates of graduation. Whether or not individual laws led to this slow yet continuous improvement can be debated. Individual laws shall be addressed based on their perceived intent, and the specific objective the United States was attempting to achieve. As a reminder, the laws fall into one of the following three categories: democratic preservation, nationalism, and civil rights.

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<sup>118</sup> Ferguson, Maria. "ESSA Opens School Door to Social-emotional Learning." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 97, no. 8 (2016): 74-75. Accessed March 14, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/24893341](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24893341)>. 74.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 74 .

### *Democratic Preservation*

The role of the federal government in American education has become more evident based on the fundamental ideology that education is required to preserve democracy. The original US Office of Education and the federal education requirement was established in 1803—to require that newly admitted states must offer public education—provide evidence regarding the federal government’s intent for the education of its citizens. It wanted education to become a standardized “right” embedded within the addition of newer states admitted into the Union. Initially, the following laws are perceived to have had the original idea that would later sustain and preserve democracy: *Land Ordinance Act of 1785*, *Northwest Ordinances of 1787*, *Morrill Act in 1862*, *No Child Left Behind* (2001) (NCLB), and *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015) (ESSA). Based on the availability and recency of NCLB and ESSA, they offer more insight with understanding contemporary education policy trends.

The passage of NCLB redirected power to the federal government and allowed for intervention with schools failing to meet standards.<sup>120</sup> With strict proficiency requirements and looming penalties that would haunt individual school districts<sup>121</sup>, it can be argued that objectives of NCLB were wildly unrealistic. These objectives placed an undue burden on the capabilities of average students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. An important point to consider is the modest improvement of North Carolina schools that occurred after receive one threat from the first NCLB sanction.<sup>122</sup> Schools typically imposed immediate changes in management with restructured leadership after the

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<sup>120</sup> Sunderman GL, Kim JS. “The expansion of federal power and the politics of implementing the No Child Left Behind Act.” *Teachers College Record* [Internet]. 2007;109 (5) :1063.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 1062.

<sup>122</sup> Ahn, Thomas, Vigdor, and Jacob. “The Impact of No Child Left Behind's Accountability Sanctions on School Performance: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from North Carolina.” *NBER*, September 18, 2014. <<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20511>>. 3.



first warning which did not have a noticeable effect on students from low-income backgrounds.<sup>123</sup>

Since schools were judged based on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), it became near-impossible to have 100% of students at their required reading level. One specific aspect of this problem was the inability of higher achieving students to pull the weight of poorly performing students that may have to deal with various disadvantages.<sup>124</sup>

The NCLB discovered one solution, however, was the replacement of a poorly performing school's principal. Principal turnover suggested an increase in North Carolina schools with an estimated impact at 13% based on optimal bandwidth.<sup>125</sup> Schools that failed to meet AYP by the sixth year required restructuring plans.<sup>126</sup> Assuming that a school fails for six years, it seems obvious that replacing top leadership would result in positive change. Despite the plausibility of removing principals to improve school standings, it is impressive that graduation rates still improved from 72% in 2001 to 84% in 2015 based on the above chart.

### *Nationalism*

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, rival-tendencies unfolded between the Soviet Union and the United States. As a tactic to surpass the capabilities of the Soviets, the United States ratified the National Defense Education Act. Since the “pride” of the United States served as a driving factor, the National Defense Education Act was a “nationalistic” device utilized to outperform the Soviets. Even after the contentious nature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century space race, nationalism continued to become embedded within American education well after the passage of the NDEA. The precedent observed by the notions of national defense argues that, “part of a program to fortify the United States against

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>124</sup> Turner, Cory. “No Child Left Behind: What Worked, What Didn't.” *NPR*. October 27, 2015. <<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/27/443110755/no-child-left-behind-what-worked-what-didnt>>.

<sup>125</sup> Ahn, Thomas, Vigdor, and Jacob. “The Impact of No Child Left Behind's Accountability Sanctions on School Performance: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from North Carolina.” *NBER*, September 18, 2014.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 22.

perceived threats to its well-being and democratic foundation.”<sup>127</sup> While it may have served its purpose during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may be important for the betterment of education within the United States to move away from the incorporation of an ideology rooted within nationalism.

One specific reason for a departure from nationalism lies in the notion that, “nationalism does not encourage us to critique our country and seek its betterment.”<sup>128</sup> Questioning the systematic decision-making rooted in tradition rather than practicality, can lead towards a long-term solution that has citizens questioning public policy rather than blind acceptance. More specifically, the nature of education policy would benefit from this shift in mentality. Changes within educational federalism would eventually lead to observable effects at the federal level, however, it would require a generational shift towards approaching the development of education altogether. If nationalism in education served its specific purpose with the passage of the NDEA, why does it need to continue well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

One might argue that the recent emergence of current geopolitical trends may signal the necessity of producing highly education workers that can perform against other global competitors, such as China. More recently, China is expected to surpass the United States as the world’s largest economy several years earlier than anticipated.<sup>129</sup> If this ultimately results in China overtaking the United States as the global hegemony, American citizens will need to demonstrate higher intellectual capabilities to compete with an increasingly competitive workforce. One metric that illustrates this concept is published in the annual “Global Competitiveness Report”. The intent of the publication

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<sup>127</sup> Strain, M. (2005). “In Defense of a Nation: The National Defense Education Act, Project English, and the Origins of Empirical Research in Composition.” *JAC*, 25(3), 513-542. Retrieved March 31, 2020, from <[www.jstor.org/stable/20866703](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866703)>. 515.

<sup>128</sup> Loewen, James W. “Lies My Teacher Told Me Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong.” *New York: Simon & Schuster*, 2007. 309.

<sup>129</sup> Cheng, Evelyn, and Yen Nee Lee. "New Chart Shows China Could Overtake the U.S. As the World's Largest Economy Earlier Than Expected." *CNBC*. Last modified February 1, 2021. <<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/01/new-chart-shows-china-gdp-could-overtake-us-sooner-as-covid-took-its-toll.html>>.

provides policy-makers an “annual yardstick” intended to “look beyond short-term and reactionary measures and to instead assess their progress against the full set of factors that determine productivity.”<sup>130</sup> We can presume that more educated citizens shall lead to greater global competitiveness and ultimately more opportunities for the average American citizen.

In essence, NDEA may have been a short-term solution that only served to support Americans through a near-sighted lens. One claim supporting this assertion is the state of textbooks taught in American history classes. “Textbooks are often muddled by the conflicting desires to promote inquiry and to indoctrinate blind patriotism”.<sup>131</sup> Whether or not Americans acknowledge claims of this nature as factual or false, it brings to light an important point. To what extent should we question the materials used in schools and how does this shape the fundamental belief system developed by students within American public education? Is it plausible that future curriculum may be designed to outperform China as NDEA sought to outperform the Soviet Union?

### *Civil Rights*

One Supreme Court Case formulated around the promotion of civil rights in the United States include *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities for blacks and whites was “inherently unequal” during *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>132</sup> By overturning the 1896 precedent set by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the path towards civil rights movements throughout the 1960s effectively began to gain momentum.<sup>133</sup> The results of *Brown v. Board of Education* did not immediately lead to swift integration within the desegregation of schools. Still, it slowly began to shift the mindset ingrained from centuries of oppression. One of the tactics to

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<sup>130</sup> Schwab, Klaus. The Global Competitiveness Report 2019. World Economic Forum, 2019.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>132</sup> McDearman, Karen M. "Brown v. Board of Education." In *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 10: Law and Politics*, edited by Ely James W. and Bond Bradley G., by Wilson Charles Reagan, 81-83. University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Accessed April 1, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469616742\\_ely.24](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469616742_ely.24)>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 82.

speed up the integration process came in the form of withholding federal funding to schools that persisted to maintain policies rooted within segregation.<sup>134</sup> Historically speaking, however, *Brown v. Board of Education* was the first step in creating systematic reform that would not only shape the nature of public education, but the race laws and policies that would impact the many facets of American life.<sup>135</sup> A major component was the ensuing “white flight” that unraveled during the 1960s among public schools. Between 1967 and 1976, the average city lost approximately 33% of its white enrollment within the public education system whereas “the number of white elementary and secondary students fell by only 6 percent” at the national level.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, this impacts funding budgets and the racial makeup of schools affected by “white flight”. To combat these effects during the 1970s, the defunct “Emergency School Assistance Act” was intended to provide matching funds from the federal government to support cooperating states and districts to further desegregation.<sup>137</sup>

The culmination of efforts by civil rights groups and activists led to widespread efforts during the 1960s that removed archaic legislation that oppressed disenfranchised members of the United States. Spearheaded by President John F. Kennedy and signed into law by Lyndon B. Johnson, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 facilitated progression towards educational opportunities for disenfranchised Americans.<sup>138</sup> President Johnson’s sought to “wield the nation’s self-professed Judeo-Christian ethic as a sword in its behalf,” therefore affirming his commitment to define education and public service as a moral issue.<sup>139</sup> His intent sought to enforce equality “without

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>136</sup> Farley, Reynolds, Toni Richards, and Clarence Wurdock. "School Desegregation and White Flight: An Investigation of Competing Models and Their Discrepant Findings." *Sociology of Education* 53, no. 3 (1980): 123-39. Accessed March 11, 2021. doi:10.2307/2112408.

<sup>137</sup> Rossell, Christine H., and Willis D. Hawley. "Policy Alternatives for Minimizing White Flight." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 4, no. 2 (1982): 205-22. Accessed March 11, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1164014>>.

<sup>138</sup> Civil Rights Act of 1964. Pub L. 88–352, 78 Stat. 241.

<sup>139</sup> Woods, Randall B. "The Politics of Idealism: Lyndon Johnson, Civil Rights, and Vietnam." *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 1 (2007): 1-18. Accessed April 1, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/24916017](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24916017)>.

discrimination or segregation on the grounds of race, color, religion, or national origin.”<sup>140</sup> While the Civil Right Act of 1964 will forever hold an incredibly important role with the future of the United States, it was President Johnson signing ESEA into law that would largely create contributions towards integration efforts stemming from the federal level.<sup>141</sup>

In 1994, President Bill Clinton would approve a reauthorization of ESEA to “increase performance reporting and embrace educational accountability.”<sup>142</sup> Along with the companion legislation titled “Goals 2000,” the nature of ESEA during the 1990s began to move towards establishing greater accountability by enforcing standards associated with each specific grade.<sup>143</sup> Legislation that initially began as a result of promoting Civil Rights shifted towards encompassing performance-based measurements. American public education between ESEA’s initial passage in 1965 to present has undergone a significant transformation with support of ambitious federal policies. It began with expanding civil rights and slowly transformed to encompass “standards, testing, accountability, and choice.”<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusion

The role and intent of the federal government with its involvement on public education has undergone massive transformations throughout the past few centuries. From the 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century, the educational needs of Americans have evolved based on unpredictable circumstances that have required a continuous cycle of adjustments. The federal government initially had a much smaller role with education policy that slowly transitioned into taking on much more responsibilities and control

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<sup>140</sup> Civil Rights Act of 1964. Pub L. 88–352, 78 Stat. 241.

<sup>141</sup> McGuinn, Patrick. "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015): 77-94. Accessed February 5, 2020. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.04. p 81.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 91.

over the execution of education policy. One delineating factor that has dictated student performance is a result of how much the federal government intervened with state and local regulations. The comparison of NCLB versus ESSA indicates that greater governing authority granted to individual states results in a more positive outcome for students. Under this presumption, the federal government needs to have a smaller role with influencing education policy. It additionally proves that excessive educational federalism is a negative concept that should not be continued within future policy design. If the federal government continues to practice excessive intervention, student performance will likely continue to decline as observed with Common Core and NCLB.

### *Future Policy Design*

As suggested by historical legislation that has driven changes in American education, impending issues of the future will inevitably shape how the next generation receives schooling. Certain scholars contend that it is never too early to begin the process of developing newer methods of academic instruction. Before delving into ideas by scholars regarding the future of academic instruction, it is important to establish the importance of education at its core. One suggestion includes four areas that should receive consideration for future policy agendas. These areas include: readiness to learn (preparing children prior to kindergarten enrollment)<sup>145</sup>, teacher quality, curriculum, and funding.<sup>146</sup> Although the latter three areas do appear within NCLB, refining the planning and execution stages of policy design would likely have a more positive impact than NCLB ultimately did. Nonetheless, it becomes increasingly paramount that intervention by the federal government achieves equal educational opportunities regardless of race or background. Conversely, the federal government should not have a degree of power that exceeds that of individual states.

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<sup>145</sup> Jennings, Jack. "It's Time to Redefine the Federal Role in K-12 Education." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 100, no. 1 (2018): 8-14. Accessed February 4, 2020. doi:10.2307/26552418.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Disparities directed at disenfranchised citizens began to improve during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was evident during *Brown v. Board of Education* and the ensuing legislation passed during the 1960s- ESEA and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Historical observations indicate that a large number of states have failed to provide meaningful efforts that minimize racial disparities regarding education opportunities.<sup>147</sup> Conversely, despite the capability of the federal government to enforce integration and quality, it weakened standards and hindered progression with the approval of the NCLB. This may result from communication problems that exist between researchers and policymakers. Certain evidence indicates that prevalence of pessimistic literature describing effective education policy research and its inability to properly be disseminated to interest groups, bureaucrats, and legislators.<sup>148</sup> This may or may not be reflective of stances taken by policymakers based on political party ideology.

It is difficult to assume that former Presidents within the Republican Party have attempted to give greater power to individual states. In contrast, Presidents within the Democrat Party have sought to garner greater control at the federal level. After President Jimmy Carter established the centralized and relatively powerful Department of Education,<sup>149</sup> President Ronald Reagan attempted to dissolve it by giving power back to individual states; an attempt that was also observed during President Donald Trump's time in office.<sup>150</sup> When President George W. Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind Act," which arguably micromanaged education at the federal level, President Barack Obama advocated giving power back to states with the "Every Student Succeeds Act." More

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<sup>147</sup> Robinson, Kimberly Jenkins. "The Past, Present, and Future of Equal Educational Opportunity: A Call for a New Theory of Education Federalism." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 79, no. 1 (2012): 427-66. Accessed March 8, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/41552906](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41552906)>. 454.

<sup>148</sup> Kirst, Michael W. "Bridging Education Research and Education Policymaking." *Oxford Review of Education* 26, no. 3/4 (2000): 379-91. Accessed March 14, 2020. <[www.jstor.org/stable/1050765](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1050765)>. 379.

<sup>149</sup> Department of Education Organization Act, Public Law 96-88, U.S. Statutes at Large 93 Stat. 668 (1979): 5.

<sup>150</sup> Vakilifathi, Mona. "Why Trump is Trying to Reduce the Status of the Department of Education." Brookings. Last modified July 16, 2018. <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/07/16/why-trump-is-trying-to-reduce-the-status-of-the-department-of-education/>>.

recently, President Trump advocated to “get rid of Common Core – keep education local!”<sup>151</sup>

Although Common Core was developed by governors and state superintendents, not all state adopted these standards regardless of “extra funding” that would have been received.<sup>152</sup> Individual states, at the time, would need to be convinced by President Trump to abandon Common Core; it was not something that could be federally mandated by the President.<sup>153</sup>

Still, as referenced earlier, many states willingly abandoned Common Core because of its detrimental effects on annual student testing. Under this specific circumstance, why should states be forced to adopt curriculum that inevitably fails its students? Between NCLB and Common Core curriculum, the case studies from this chapter illustrate the necessity of reverting back towards having the federal government play a smaller role with education policy. States and local governments are much more likely to have the best interest of their citizens in mind. Deviating from this concept brings more difficulty with enhancing the academic performance of American students.

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<sup>151</sup> Turner, Cory. "Can A President Trump Get Rid Of Common Core?" NPR.org. Last modified November 10, 2016. <<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/11/10/501426803/can-president-trump-get-rid-of-common-core>>.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 3

### STATE GOVERNMENTS

#### Introduction

Formalized public education with state government guidance in the United States is a relatively newer concept initially established at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>154</sup> As mentioned previously, education was deeply intertwined with the development of the United States as early Founding Fathers, such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson<sup>155</sup>, attributed it as a prerequisite to supporting democracy. These assertions were later proven by empirical studies that indicate a correlation between education and the likelihood of democracy persisting.<sup>156</sup> The survivability of democracy was argued to be improved at corresponding income levels relative to education received.<sup>157</sup> As the literacy of American citizens began to rise during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century with increased funding established at the state-level, performance began to taper and plateau towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The divergence that would drive centuries of education policy transformation among the federal and state government became much more pronounced during the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Spearheaded by Horace Mann, Massachusetts was among the first states striving to enforce a nonsectarian education system.<sup>158</sup> Ensuing policy was later enacted to emphasize higher education rather than education between grades K-12. It was not until nearly 100

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<sup>154</sup> Webb, L. Dean. *The History of American Education: A Great American Experiment*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2006.

<sup>155</sup> Sanchez, Ramon. "Jefferson, the Founder of the Ideology of Democratic Education." *The Journal of Education* 155, no. 3 (1973): 45-55. Accessed March 12, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42741855>>.

<sup>156</sup> Acemoglu D., Johnson S., Robinson J., Yared P. (2005). From education to democracy. *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*, 95, 44–49

<sup>157</sup> Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M. E., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (n.d.). Conclusion. *Democracy and Development*, 269-278. doi:10.1017/cbo9780511804946.007

<sup>158</sup> Pelsue, Brendan. "When It Comes to Education, the Federal Government is in Charge of ... Um, What?" Harvard Graduate School of Education. Last modified Fall 2017. <<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/17/08/when-it-comes-education-federal-government-charge-um-what#:~:text=Beginning%20with%20Horace%20Mann%20in,was%20aimed%20at%20higher%20education>>.

years later that the federal government began to incorporate itself into a much more robust role with guiding the future of education policy.

The role of state governments and education development has included the act of policymakers to “bring greater coherence and consistency to educational practice through a strategy of state policy alignment.”<sup>159</sup> In a sense, the role of state education departments is almost “ill-defined”. “Their [state education departments] institutional roles change as external circumstances change.”<sup>160</sup> States have the ability to play an important role within the educational reform process to reflect state policy, it is not entirely clear how effective nor durable state influence can achieve.<sup>161</sup>

Although historical examples can argue the benefits of state legislation with federal guidance, an all-inclusive approach does not yet exist to fully maximize resources that tend to vary from state to state. On the contrary, certain states appeared to have “uncovered” strategies that have maximized student performance with marginal changes in education funding. On the contrary, states can have vastly different practices when it comes to funding or the responsibility of handling funding. Hawaii, for instance, is the only state that contains a comprehensive statewide system that enforces legislation to promote equal opportunities for all students.<sup>162</sup> Regardless of state differences, empirical data provided by the federal government suggests that several changes can be implemented at the state level to effectively use taxpayer money towards the quality of education received by American citizens. The Journal of Economic Growth notes the importance of education and the effects leading to a strong positive connection between educated individuals and civic

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<sup>159</sup> Timar, Thomas B. "The Institutional Role of State Education Departments: A Historical Perspective." *American Journal of Education* 105, no. 3 (1997): 231-60. Accessed March 13, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1085506>>.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>162</sup> Zulich, Jan. "Hawaii's School System Is One of a Kind." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 70, no. 7 (1989): 546-49. Accessed March 12, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20403957>>.

engagement.<sup>163</sup> The intent of this chapter will examine various solutions for state governments that can improve legislative policy, efficient spending, and other variables associated with individual states related to education policy. This intent of this chapter attempts to answer the following questions: what improvements should be initiated at the state level? Which states tend to outperform other states regardless of funding allocations per students? Does spending truly affect a state's performance when compared to relatively similar states based on population and spending? How has anachronistic policies failed to garner improved performance among students within a state? Unless specifically stated, references regarding student "performance" or "achievement" is based on government-mandated standardized testing. This chapter utilizes three case studies to address these concerns.

## **Literature Review**

### *Early Budgetary Roots*

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Northern states arrived at the conclusion that common-school education for all children was to be established. Prior to the start of the Civil War, southern states began to adopt a similar stance. Once the decision was made to provide free public education, the source of funding became a topic of contention. New England resorted to land endowments, local taxes, rate bills, license taxes, and direct local appropriations as primary sources to finance education.<sup>164</sup> Other states, however, resorted to lotteries, liquor licensing, theaters, and other irregular methods to fund schools.<sup>165</sup> These early unconventional approaches of funding are commendable, and would later shape the future of modernized education budgets. Years later

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<sup>163</sup> Glaeser, Edward & Ponzetto, Giacomo & Shleifer, Andrei, 2007. "Why does democracy need education?," *Journal of Economic Growth*, Springer, vol. 12(2), pages 77-99, June. 77.

<sup>164</sup> Cubberley, Ellwood P. *Public Education in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1919. 177.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education began to receive a much stronger foothold in the United States at the local, state, and federal level.<sup>166</sup> Early opponents of public education, however, included people “belonging to the old aristocratic class”.<sup>167</sup> Studies conducted by Gioacchino, Sabani, and Tedeschi, later determined that personal income affects preferences for public education. Their concluding remarks indicate that public education spending should be negative due to wealthier families opposing the effects of redistribution from public funding.<sup>168</sup>

### *Casual Factors with Plateaued Performance*

Throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Congress conducted studies that provide a correlation between spending and student performance. Other variables were present, however, the underlying trends of allocating more resources to increasing the productivity of students may partially serve as a driving factor. The number of students between the ages of 5 to 19 years old enrolled in school increased from roughly 55% to approximately 90% during the 1970s.<sup>169</sup> From 1900 to 1990, total government spending increased from \$235,339 to \$207.5MM.<sup>170</sup> Despite government spending reaching \$40.3MM in 1970, it did not have any drastic effects on the number of enrolled students. We can anticipate that changes in spending may correlate with inflation among other variables; however, does a certain threshold of spending no longer yield productive results?

Another important chart from these congressional studies indicate a solid decrease on the ratio of pupils to teachers. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the pupil to teacher ratio was approximately

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<sup>166</sup> Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz. 1999. "The Shaping of Higher Education: The Formative Years in the United States, 1890 to 1940." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13 (1): 37.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>168</sup> Gioacchino, Debora Di, Laura Sabani, and Simone Tedeschi. "Individual Preferences for Public Education Spending: Does Personal Income Matter?" *Economic Modelling*, 2019. doi:10.1016/j.econmod.2019.01.007.

<sup>169</sup> Snyder, Thomas D, and National Center for Education Statistics. 120 Years of American Education: a Statistical Portrait. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993. 6.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 57-58

35:1 and reached its lowest point during the 1990s at 20:1.<sup>171</sup> There is a sense of practicality behind the notion that smaller classrooms allow teachers to be much more effective at educating. Although this may have a factor within effective teaching and the attention a teacher can provide to students, does this insinuate that all students require personalized attention to succeed? Should class size be dependent on the personalities of students that have a much greater inclination for succeeding through independence rather than requiring a greater degree of attention?

Funding began to receive less support from local sources and more support from state sources throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This led to local and state appropriations becoming nearly identical towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Federal funding, however, slowly increased throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century before tapering off between the 1970s and 1990s.<sup>172</sup>

### *Federal and State Responsibility*

We can begin our examination on the role of state education with its rise to importance during the 1970's. The 1973 case *San Antonio District v. Rodriguez*, was ruled by the Supreme Court that, "education is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under our Federal Constitution. . . no other state function is so uniformly recognized as an essential element of our society's wellbeing."<sup>173</sup> Public education was no longer the burden of the federal government as it transitioned towards becoming a responsibility of individual states. Differences with funding provided by the state tend to vary, however, it is common practice that "states today collectively provide the largest share of funding for public education in the United States, surpassing the total local government share of funding."<sup>174</sup> During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, states contributed roughly 40%

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>173</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. "State Role in Education Finance." Legislative News, Studies and Analysis | National Conference of State Legislatures. Accessed January 17, 2021. <<https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/state-role-in-education-finance.aspx>>.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

towards education revenue, local governments contributed 57% towards education revenue, and the federal government covered the last 3%.<sup>175</sup> In 2001, the average contribution among states equated to almost 7% more than the share provided by local governments based on NCES data.<sup>176</sup>

The constitution pertaining to each state legislature maintains a clause that provides a network of free public education. Each state constitution can be categorized into one of four clauses that ranges from “weakest to strongest” with respect to “fiduciary duty imposed on the state to provide public education.”<sup>177</sup> According to the legal scholar that coined these classifications, William E. Thro, a brief description is associated with how a state manages its Constitutional language. States with a “Category I” is defined as, “merely mandate a system of free public schools.” Category II includes a, “mandate that the system of public schools meet a certain minimum standard of quality, such as ‘thorough and efficient.’” Category III is, “distinguished from the Category I and II clauses by both a ‘stronger and more specific education mandate’ and ‘purposive preambles.’” Lastly, Category IV, “imposes the greatest obligation on the state legislature. . . they provide that education is ‘fundamental’, ‘primary’, or ‘paramount’.”<sup>178</sup> A cursory glance of each category does not contain a specific correlation that ties a category to the success of a state; however, it can highlight how a state might impact education policy.

### *Results from Financial Equalization*

One state that has continuously undergone financial reform which may provide a greater understanding regarding the importance of funding includes the state of Kansas. In 1992, the state of Kansas underwent a complete reformation of their public education program by revising the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

state's finance system.<sup>179</sup> The intent of the legislative initiative was to equalize per-pupil expenditures through "statewide refinancing of school districts."<sup>180</sup> This was completed upon the passage of *Kansas Statutes 72-6405-72-6440* which also received the title, *The School District and Quality Performance Act*.<sup>181</sup> Although this would lead to greater financial equality among districts throughout Kansas, it left stipulations to exist through loopholes that allowed "some districts to tax themselves more heavily in order to spend more."<sup>182</sup> The conclusive nature of the act allowed the state of Kansas to calculate corresponding weights to each school district, its allotted amount of spending based on its General Fund, and then finalized with how much aid would be received from the state.<sup>183</sup> A statewide property tax ended the use of local property taxes to cover education expenditures and later redistributed these taxes to ensure fair funding throughout each school district.

Ultimately, the newly designed revenue and expenditure equalization improved preexisting performance standards.<sup>184</sup> A study conducted at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century examined statewide district refinancing in Kansas regarding the impact of students and postsecondary educational attainment.<sup>185</sup> It was concluded that a 20% increase in spending led to an increased probability of 5% of a student continuing into some form of postsecondary education based on standardized testing.<sup>186</sup> Supplementary research argues that increasing funding can improve educational outcomes

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<sup>179</sup> Yinger, John. *Helping Children Left Behind State Aid and the Pursuit of Educational Equity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014. 147.

<sup>180</sup> Deke, John. "A Study of the Impact of Public School Spending on Postsecondary Educational Attainment Using Statewide School District Refinancing in Kansas." *Economics of Education Review* 22, no. 3 (2003): 275-84. doi:10.1016/s0272-7757(02)00025-0. 276.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>184</sup> Yinger, John. *Helping Children Left Behind State Aid and the Pursuit of Educational Equity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014. 150.

<sup>185</sup> Deke, John. "A Study of the Impact of Public School Spending on Postsecondary Educational Attainment Using Statewide School District Refinancing in Kansas." *Economics of Education Review* 22, no. 3 (2003): 275-84. doi:10.1016/s0272-7757(02)00025-0. 275.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 284.

if funding is applied to extracurricular programs or enhancements on curriculum.<sup>187</sup> In addition, despite Kansas spending an average of less than \$5,500 per pupil (during the 1990s), it maintained its status in the top fifteen states for education (based on level of educational attainment).<sup>188</sup> It is also possible that this is partially attributed to having one of the lowest teachers to pupil ratios in the United States.<sup>189</sup> Nonetheless, it wasn't until 2019 when the Kansas Supreme Court determined that "the state is finally spending enough money on its public schools under a new education funding law", yet it decided to not "end a lawsuit filed nearly a decade ago because it wants to monitor future funding by the Legislature."<sup>190</sup> These types of examples are not necessarily common, however, it underlines the stark contrast of involvement from state justices that can vary from state to state.

Other reports indicate the given benefits of school-based funding with emphasis on Texas.<sup>191</sup> It has been reported that "governance of districts and schools would change dramatically if school-based funding were implemented."<sup>192</sup> As a result, schools have much more legal liability and authority with decision making that concerns personnel, policy, and finance.<sup>193</sup> This can be argued as a means of reinforcing the plausibility that the redistribution of state-mandated budgets can effectively promote the overall productivity and performance of students within the system. Part of this concept would require a set percentage of district resources to pass directly into schools as a means of sustaining efficiency. Approximately 67% of operational expenditures in Texas are predesignated for allocation from districts to schools.<sup>194</sup> Should resources increase from

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<sup>187</sup> Bjorklund-Young, Alanna. "Does Money Matter?" Institute for Education Policy. Johns Hopkins School of Education. (2017)

<sup>188</sup> Gaquin, Deirdre A., and Katherine A. Debrandt. *Education Statistics of the United States*. Lanham: Bernan Associates, 2001. 424.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>190</sup> Hanna, John. "Kansas High Court Says Education Funding is Adequate." AP NEWS. Last modified June 14, 2019. <<https://apnews.com/article/16d63062f0a645f6a9231e22b623e9fb>>.

<sup>191</sup> Clark, Catherine, and Laurence Toenjes, "Exploring Alternatives to School-Based Funding," *Selected Papers in School Based Finance*, National Center for Education Statistics NCES 98-217, <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=98217>>, 1998, 109-135.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 129.



approximately 67% to 90%, it can be expected that schools would receive an additional \$3.6B while district-level resources would decrease by 68%.<sup>195</sup>

### *Explaining State Rankings*

Data released in a recent *National Assessment of Education Progress* (NAEP) assessment indicates that Massachusetts is among the top states in the U.S. for education based on math and reading testing.<sup>196</sup> Based on the educational institutions within the United States having the description of “loosely coupled”, the state of Massachusetts was able to capitalize on incentivizing teacher and student performance with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993.<sup>197</sup> The benefits of incentivizing educators bolster the motivation for students to exceed mandated federal standardized testing. As observed with Kansas, massive state and local legislation changes uprooted archaic methods of outdated education systems which ultimately benefited students. Another observation proven by MERA is the connection that liberal states have higher state appropriation efforts for education.<sup>198</sup> States that emphasize public education from developmental years to the university level may facilitate an environment that fosters student success.

One of the poorest performing states in standardized testing is Alabama. It is likely that Alabama receives low rankings based on the lack of alignment between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions.<sup>199</sup> Alabama’s postsecondary alignment criteria lacks on every area in

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>196</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). "Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto the NAEP Scales." U.S. Department of Education. Accessed January 17, 2021. <<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/studies/pdf/2019040.pdf>>.

<sup>197</sup> McDermott, Kathryn A. "Incentives, Capacity, and Implementation: Evidence from Massachusetts Education Reform." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 16, no. 1 (2006): 45-65. Accessed January 16, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3525748>>. 50.

<sup>198</sup> Archibald, Robert B., and David H. Feldman. "State Higher Education Spending and the Tax Revolt." *The Journal of Higher Education* 77, no. 4 (2006): 618-44. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/3838710>>. 634.

<sup>199</sup> Key, Logan. "State Education Finance and Governance Profile: Alabama." *Peabody Journal of Education* 85, no. 1 (2010): 49-53. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/20720795>>. 52.

addition to state policy regarding college readiness.<sup>200</sup> Another factor that hinders academic growth is a lower amount of funding per pupil compared to other states. Alabama currently spends \$7,608 per pupil. Compared to an average performing state, such as Delaware, the amount of spending per student is much greater. According to Katherine Canon of Vanderbilt University, Delaware averages approximately \$11,061 per pupil.<sup>201</sup> Maryland ranks 10 spots higher than Delaware yet spends \$11,962 per pupil with a slightly smaller pupil to teacher ratio. Canon additionally claims the ongoing issue of finding qualified and effective teachers. Spending more on teacher salaries in order to attract and retain a higher caliber workforce may reflect student performance.

Lastly, California has attempted numerous methods to sustain public education improvement through innovative and reformative change. Certain strategies include delegating authority to the local levels while attempting to accommodate charter schools that continue to grow by 10% each year.<sup>202</sup> Despite being a “poorly” performing state based by its economic standing, it has given local communities a much greater grasp on flexibility to control budgets and resources.<sup>203</sup>

### *Wasteful Expenditures*

Efficiency in education as a means of combating wasteful expenditures of resources and effort is an ongoing issue rooted within the public education system. In 1914, James Fleming Hosis published an article in the *Journal of Education* that outlined the importance of efficiency engineers in order to ensure that full returns are received for the amount of energy and money that is put into public schools.<sup>204</sup> Hosis contends that the three most prominent types of waste include: little use of

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>201</sup> Canon, Katherine. "State Education Finance and Governance Profile: Delaware." *Peabody Journal of Education* 85, no. 1 (2010): 58-60. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/20720797>>. 58.

<sup>202</sup> Ferguson, Maria. "California Overflows with Education Reform." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 97, no. 2 (2015): 74-75. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/24578380>>. 74.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>204</sup> Hosis, James Fleming. "WASTE IN EDUCATION." *The Journal of Education* 80, no. 3 (1989) (1914): 69-74. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42769465>>. 69.

the school plant, handicapping educators, and failing to assist pupils with the maximization of time allotted during school.<sup>205</sup> The bulk of his article outlines the problems with education during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to how some of these problems can be mitigated. His proposal seeks to improve the academic experience and decrease the number of individuals that “fumble” through the system. The concepts that are proposed by Hosic are based on improving conditions, utilizing attainable standards, and systematizing curriculum and the metrics that can determine final academic achievement.<sup>206</sup> The value that can be derived from studying articles pertaining to issues faced during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can conceptualize trends that linger after legislation is proposed and approved. Nearly 80 years after Hosic’s article was published, another article written by Allan Odden, David Monk, Yasser Nakib, and Lawrence Picus which addresses public education issues and the steps that need to be taken to fix a broken system. The authors state their intent to underline basic facts behind the level and uses of education funding.<sup>207</sup>

Overarching management has been identified as an unnecessary means of government control resulting in wasteful allocations of funding. Before a governor of a state can submit an approval for a budget, it must receive approval from all subordinate agencies.<sup>208</sup> Utah, for instance, uses quarterly allotments and is established on the basis of a work budget. This results in duplicated sets of materials and wastes resources.<sup>209</sup> Streamlined processes conducted by well trained staff could resolve certain problems with the funding procedures; however, maintaining talented personnel has proven to be a consistent issue. Historically, efforts to combat wastefulness are evident based on the

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>207</sup> Odden, Allan, David Monk, Yasser Nakib, and Lawrence Picus. "The Story of the Education Dollar: No Academy Awards and No Fiscal Smoking Guns." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no. 2 (1995): 161-68. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/20405513>>.

<sup>208</sup> Fuller, E., & Pearson, J. B. (Eds.). (1969). *Education in the States: Nationwide Development Since 1900*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. 115.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 115.

objectives of the Council of Educational Facility Planners.<sup>210</sup> The council's role is to mitigate wastefulness, questionable equipment, poor planning, and other undesirable building additions.

### *Proposed Funding Changes*

Various authors have published articles regarding their views on how government funding should be distributed. One of these articles discussing the distribution of funds can be based on a supply and demand model. Barbara Burnell published an article that claims spending on education is based on the congruent interaction between supply and demand.<sup>211</sup> The amount of education consumed by residents shall be dependent on school district expenditures and the services available.<sup>212</sup>

Another article examines the cost-effectiveness for educational research pointing towards numerous options to cut-costs and eliminate waste. Several highlights derived from suggestions proposed by Barbara Hummel-Rossi and Jane Ashdown include revamping the process of articulating final reports for "cost-analysis" analysts.<sup>213</sup> The intent is to streamline the entire process of making observations, synthesizing results, identifying outcomes, analyzing effects of time, and compiling findings to make proper suggestions. Certain issues among older Americans, however, may lead to a redistribution of funds away from school districts.<sup>214</sup>

Some Americans, particularly senior citizens, do not always view public education as an important necessity. Based on empirical data presented by Amy Harris, William Evans, and Robert

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 459.

<sup>211</sup> Burnell, Barbara S. "The Effect of School District Structure on Education Spending." *Public Choice* 69, no. 3 (1991): 253-64. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/30025426>>. 255.

<sup>212</sup> Burnell, Barbara S. "The Effect of School District Structure on Education Spending." *Public Choice* 69, no. 3 (1991): 253-64. <<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.troy.edu/stable/30025426>>. 255.

<sup>213</sup> Hummel-Rossi, Barbara, and Jane Ashdown. "The State of Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analyses in Education." *Review of Educational Research* 72, no. 1 (2002): 20.

<sup>214</sup> Harris, Amy Rehder, William N. Evans, and Robert M. Schwab. "Education Spending in an Aging America." *Journal of Public Economics* 81, no. 3 (2001): 449-72. doi:10.1016/s0047-2727(00)00133-x.

Schwab, an above average number of senior citizens in the United States have a negative effect on public education spending.<sup>215</sup> Proposed funding changes are not always in favor of students; therefore, it is important to find reasons that incentivize senior citizens to favor advancing public education. One proposed argument is to highlight the benefits of having an educated workforce leading to improving communities entirely. It is established through this literature that “liberal states” are more willing to increase education spending; however, attempting to persuade other states that view education differently may prove difficult.

## **Methodology of Research**

### *Case Study Selection*

Three case studies are analyzed within this chapter to aid with understanding the trajectory of an individual state’s role with regard to education policy. The primary drivers of change within each individual state are broken into three case study categories: state policy, state spending, and regional variables associated within individual states. It is expected that further exploration within these three facets of state governments will provide quantitative results that underline effective policy changes based on ensuing academic performance. The case studies are not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis on all policies, spending, nor regional variables at the state level. Each case study is intended to underline various themes prevalent among certain states along with how addressing concerns that may be impeding the performance of students enrolled at public schools. As a result, certain states are chosen based on policy that arguably has had a profound impact on academic achievement. State attributes are widely ranging and are intended to solely focus on areas deemed “critical” by the author.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 470.

Specific allocations of funding have proven to facilitate both positive and negative trends regarding the performance of students taking standardized tests in the United States. Out-of-date methods towards approaching the development of education and its further dissemination appears to be an ongoing trend plaguing most states. States that are typically governed through liberal ideologies have noticed much greater appropriations in funding compared to non-liberal states. Funding should not be considered an all-inclusive solution towards approaching education, but rather a foundational pillar that should not be overlooked or underestimated. In the continuing chapters of this thesis, other important factors that play into the developmental psychology of pupils will be examined as an attempt to better understand the variables that can improve the academic capabilities of students. These factors are founded on the roles of community and familial support. Based on the information provided by the literature review, several case studies underline shortcomings of education at the state level. The first case study case explores state policy.

### **Case Study 1: State Policy**

#### *Racial Integration*

Education legislation can be perceived as “outdated” throughout a number of state governments. The term “outdated” is used to classify states that refuse to provide updated education policy aligned with the intent of objectives set forth by the federal government. One of the worst performing states, Alabama, continues to use archaic principles that damper any sort of improvement within their state education system. Haunted by 20<sup>th</sup> century legislation that incessantly pushed for segregation, the state of Alabama imposed various loopholes to delay any sort of integration for as long as possible. Despite the United States Supreme Court’s ruling to strike down segregation during the 1954 case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, Alabama passed legislation in 1956 that

eliminated the state's responsibility to guarantee public education.<sup>216</sup> Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a lack of change regarding any sort of reformative action that modernizes state economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The lack of civic-mindedness among Alabama's government towards racial integration undermines student potential and creates cause for continued poor performance. The number of high school graduates rapidly increased after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that favors the idea that racial integration in schools can lead to improved student performance.<sup>217</sup> Nearly 65 years after the *Brown v Board of Education* ruling, Sumter County in Alabama finally opened its first racially integrated school.<sup>218</sup> Massachusetts, the number one ranked state for education, has accepted students of all races to Lowell High School since its founding in 1831. It was also determined in the court case, *McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education*, that the state had an obligation to provide for all students regardless of residence.<sup>219</sup> Various authors referenced in the literature review section provide concurring statements that support the benefits of equal funding by district. The importance of treating all pupils equally regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds plays an important role by ensuring that academic opportunities are as fair as possible.

### *Reactionary Policy*

The concept of individual states exercising formal state legislative and legal challenges is a historically rare practice.<sup>220</sup> The passage of "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), placed an "extensive"

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<sup>216</sup> EJI. "School Segregation in Alabama." Equal Justice Initiative. Last modified February 28, 2019. <<https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-school-segregation-in-alabama/#:~:text=Board%20of%20Education%20struck%20down,responsibility%20to%20guarantee%20public%20education>>

<sup>217</sup> Snyder, Thomas D, and National Center for Education Statistics. 120 Years of American Education: a Statistical Portrait. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993. 2.

<sup>218</sup> Crain, Trisha. "Rural Alabama Charter Opens as First Integrated School in Sumter County." Al.com. August 13, 2018. Accessed July 16, 2019. <[https://www.al.com/news/2018/08/charter\\_school\\_opens\\_doors\\_as.html](https://www.al.com/news/2018/08/charter_school_opens_doors_as.html)>.

<sup>219</sup> *McDuffy vs. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education*, 415 Mass. 545 (1993).

<sup>220</sup> Shelly, Bryan. "Rebels and Their Causes: State Resistance to No Child Left Behind." *Publius* 38, no. 3 (2008): 444-68. Accessed January 14, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20184981>>. 444.

demand on states to enforce “accountability, school choice, and teacher certification systems” by threatening the removal of federal funding. Although NCLB should not necessarily be classified as “antiquated”, its role as a response towards addressing antiquated federal education policy created a divisive shift amongst the state and federal government. It was a replacement to the 1965 “Elementary and Secondary Education Act”, however, there was great resistance from individual states that should have been mitigated beforehand.

One prominent issue with NCLB was the requirement that states were obligated to make relative progress towards reaching 100% proficiency in Math and English by 2014. This unrealistic expectation led to nearly all states potentially losing federal funding which, on average, equated to 10% of school district budgets. By 2012, nearly 80% of schools failed to meet the required level of progression that would have ultimately lead to a number of consequences imposed by the federal government.<sup>221</sup> It appears that redistributing education policy to states removes the possibility of federal government “micromanaging”- a concept that clearly caused more harm than good under NCLB. The underlying question resulting from ESSA that requires certain further information is how accountability plays a role. Federal intervention is required for the bottom 5% of state schools in addition to high schools with graduation problems. Conversely, the lowest performing schools may receive required attention to ameliorate poor academic performance while the remaining 95% of high schools are not subjected to the crosshairs of the federal government.

In December of 2015, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) was signed into law and reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.<sup>222</sup> These acts placed the responsibility of measuring effectiveness and accountability of public education systems into the control of state

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 1869

<sup>222</sup> NASBO. “State Expenditure Report.” National Association of State Budget Officers. *2018 State Expenditure Report, Fiscal Years 2016-2018* (2018): <[https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASBO/9d2d2db1-c943-4f1b-b750-0fca152d64c2/UploadedImages/SER%20Archive/2018\\_State\\_Expenditure\\_Report\\_S.pdf](https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASBO/9d2d2db1-c943-4f1b-b750-0fca152d64c2/UploadedImages/SER%20Archive/2018_State_Expenditure_Report_S.pdf)>



governments. State plans were developed and submitted to the federal government that approved each submitted plan from all 50 states. Each state created approaches towards long-term goals for student achievement and accountability allowing for greater flexibility to ensure performance, program funding, and improvement actions for lower-performing schools.<sup>223</sup> Each of these plans were developed through state education agencies with governor consultation, lawmakers, state boards of education, local school districts.<sup>224</sup> It is noted that the expenditure data excludes certain data varying from employer contributions or teacher pensions.

Based on the early stages of ESSA, it is uncertain as to how this Act will become embedded and subsequently molded into the current American education system. As the successor to NCLB, it is presumed to have shifted authority back to local and state districts while undoing federal shifts observed during NCLB.<sup>225</sup> It is possible that certain problems will arise from placing more power of self-governance to the state. The intent of ESSA falls in line with the literature published by Barbara Hummel-Rossi and Jane Ashdown regarding streamlined processes that address state and local needs. State government will have a channelized overview and understanding that can tailor programs to the specific needs of students. As the Department of Education retains accountability to the individual programs designed by each state, it should be expected that a certain standard must be met as imposed through the federal government.<sup>226</sup> In fact, the transfer of educational authority from government entities to parents represents a “durable shift” within American political development.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Heise, Michael. "From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: Back to a Future For Education Federalism." *Columbia Law Review* 117, no. 7 (2017): 1859-896. Accessed January 14, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44425412>>. 1861.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

## Case Study 2: Sources of State Funding

Most U.S. States tend to hold differing percentages of its annual budget towards funding elementary and secondary education. Elementary and secondary education averaged approximately 19.6% of state expenditures during fiscal year 2018. This percentage was comprised of 13.5% of “federal funds”, 11.8% of “other state funds”, 0.8% of “bonds”, and 73.9% of “general funds”. The criteria in which state funding is designed may include a number of external factors predicated on state constitutional requirements, local revenue structures, and school finance systems. In fiscal 2018, 81.7% of “general funds” is sourced from three primary tax-sources: personal income taxes, sales and use taxes, and corporate income taxes.

Additional data sourced from the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) indicate that four out of five of the top performing states (Massachusetts, Minnesota, Virginia, and New Jersey)<sup>227</sup> fund the bulk of education expenses from personal income tax.<sup>228</sup> The fifth state, Wyoming, uses a modicum amount of funding in comparison primarily derived from sales and use tax, and all other general fund revenue.<sup>229</sup> Poorer performing states, such as Alabama and Mississippi rely less on income tax with a greater tendency of using sales and use tax.<sup>230</sup>

The table below (Table 1) provides an overview of funding throughout the United States. It illustrates a baseline average in 2016 and allows for a quick comparison between individual states. Inflation adjustments are also incorporated between fiscal years.

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<sup>227</sup>NAEP. "NAEP State Profiles." *The Nation's Report Card*. Accessed July 19, 2019. <<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2017R3>>.

<sup>228</sup> NASBO. “State Expenditure Report.” National Association of State Budget Officers. *2018 State Expenditure Report, Fiscal Years 2016-2018* (2018): <[https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASBO/9d2d2db1-c943-4f1b-b750-0fca152d64c2/UploadedImages/SER%20Archive/2018\\_State\\_Expenditure\\_Report\\_S.pdf](https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASBO/9d2d2db1-c943-4f1b-b750-0fca152d64c2/UploadedImages/SER%20Archive/2018_State_Expenditure_Report_S.pdf)>

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Table 1

Amounts and percentage changes of inflation-adjusted state, local, and federal revenues per pupil, by year and state or jurisdiction: Fiscal years 2014 through 2016

State or jurisdiction	State, local, and federal revenues per pupil <sup>1</sup>				
	FY 14 (inflation- adjusted to FY 16 dollars)	FY 15 (inflation- adjusted to FY 16 dollars)	Percentage change FY 14– FY 15	FY 16	Percentage change FY 15– FY 16
<b>United States<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$12,645</b>	<b>\$12,971</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>\$13,474</b>	<b>3.9</b>
Alabama	10,052	10,060	0.1	10,200	1.4
Alaska	20,735	22,530	8.7	18,851	-16.3 <sup>3</sup>
Arizona	8,825	9,001	2.0	9,293	3.2
Arkansas	10,625	10,835	2.0	10,939	1.0
California	11,140	11,866	6.5	13,606	14.7 <sup>4</sup>
Colorado	10,686	11,058	3.5	11,386	3.0
Connecticut	20,456	21,106	3.2	21,745	3.0
Delaware	15,170	15,606	2.9	16,247	4.1
District of Columbia	28,150	27,998	-0.5	27,067	-3.3
Florida	9,652	9,783	1.3	10,002	2.2
Georgia	10,523	10,834	3.0	11,164	3.0
Hawaii	14,637	14,903	1.8	16,656	11.8
Idaho	7,467	7,941	6.3	8,258	4.0
Illinois	13,375	13,419	0.3	13,569	1.1
Indiana	11,676	11,646	-0.3	11,882	2.0
Iowa	12,533	12,878	2.7	13,106	1.8
Kansas	12,390	12,603	1.7	12,700	0.8
Kentucky	10,685	10,897	2.0	11,120	2.0
Louisiana	12,448	12,539	0.7	12,425	-0.9
Maine	14,721	15,173	3.1	15,471	2.0
Maryland	16,212	16,717	3.1	16,395	-1.9
Massachusetts	17,839	18,113	1.5	18,633	2.9
Michigan	12,364	12,734	3.0	12,912	1.4
Minnesota	13,812	14,309	3.6	14,722	2.9
Mississippi	9,121	9,332	2.3	9,673	3.7
Missouri	11,541	11,986	3.9	12,127	1.2
Montana	12,125	12,575	3.7	12,259	-2.5
Nebraska	12,956	13,423	3.6	13,769	2.6
Nevada	9,745	9,915	1.7	10,017	1.0
New Hampshire	16,033	16,314	1.8	16,752	2.7
New Jersey	20,577	20,479	-0.5	21,061	2.8
New Mexico	11,298	11,792	4.4	11,878	0.7
New York	22,585	22,961	1.7	24,717	7.6
North Carolina	8,693	8,893	2.3	9,109	2.4
North Dakota	14,653	14,909	1.7	15,694	5.3
Ohio	13,819	14,310	3.6	14,539	1.6
Oklahoma	9,043	9,155	1.2	9,049	-1.2
Oregon	11,843	12,482	5.4	12,799	2.5
Pennsylvania	16,238	16,739	3.1	17,405	4.0
Rhode Island	17,047	17,336	1.7	17,504	1.0
South Carolina	11,751	11,833	0.7	12,367	4.5
South Dakota	10,467	10,750	2.7	10,889	1.3
Tennessee	9,516	9,536	0.2	9,585	0.5
Texas	10,503	10,797	2.8	11,120	3.0
Utah	7,954	8,123	2.1	8,408	3.5

See notes at end of table.

(Source: National Center for Education Statistics)

In fiscal year 2018, it was reported that Massachusetts allocated 13.2% of its total expenditures towards elementary and secondary education expenditures with Alabama listed at 22.8%. Other states include Kansas at 30.4% and Alaska at 15.3%.<sup>231</sup> Whether a correlation exists between states that have high levels of income tax and academic performance remains to be determined. It is possible that because higher earners might live in states that require higher personal income tax, there will be a higher standard of academic performance imposed upon students by parents or guardians. Variables pertaining to familial roles, and unrelated to state legislation, will be address in Chapter 3.

Despite receiving some of the highest levels of funding in the nation, Alaskan students in grades K-12 routinely perform in the bottom 20%.<sup>232</sup> Alaska is also ranked at the very bottom of US students that graduate on time indicated by an adjusted cohort graduation rate.<sup>233</sup> There are a number of factors that may influence this outcome. Immediate differences include Alaska's geographical separation from the continental United States, its demographic makeup, and its overestimation of how funding can improve student performance. The above average level of funding Alaska grants towards schools coupled with the below average level of performance from students adequately proves that spending no longer affects performance after a certain threshold. This specific occurrence of high funding and low performance may be attributed to a number of reasons. If teachers are rewarded with additional funding even though student performance suffers, there may be little incentive to improve curriculum or teaching styles.

In conjunction with the data referenced earlier regarding state spending per pupil, there is a noticeable difference between *percentage of total expenditures* and the *amount per student*. For example,

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> NAEP. "NAEP State Profiles." The Nation's Report Card. Accessed July 19, 2019. <<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2017R3>>.

<sup>233</sup> NCES. "The Condition of Education." *Nation Center for Education Statistics*. May (2019). Accessed July 23, 2019. <[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_coi.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp)>.

Kansas spends a higher overall percentage (30.4%) yet averages a less than the national average when discussing the figure per student. The insinuation that certain states have the capability to essentially *do more with less*, confirms that performance issues are much more deeply rooted than the amount of education spending, as referenced in the literature review.

### Case Study 3: Regional Variables

Another possible answer observed in Alaska and other poorly performing states such as Idaho and New Mexico include higher rates of depression among teenagers and young adults.<sup>234</sup> This is not a definitive answer because Wyoming has high rates of depression yet students exhibit strong academic performance coupled with higher than average spending rates per pupil.<sup>235236</sup> Nonetheless, a system of high stress with ineffective teaching methods may cumulate into the current observations regarding academic performance in Alaska. Although a majority of schools may have students that struggle with mental health problems, it is possible that students within certain regions are more susceptible to such obstacles. An estimation of 10 million K-12 students within the United States have been identified as needing “professional help for mental health reasons.”<sup>237</sup> Reformative state legislation that addresses high stress environments along with not rewarding inefficient teaching may be required to observe any noticeable improvements.

Investing into programs that allow for students to better cope with depression, demanding school schedules, and curriculum may alleviate poor performances. Presently, schools are considered

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<sup>234</sup> AFSP. "Suicide Facts & Figures: United States 2019 - Chapterland.org." American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Accessed July 5, 2019. <[https://chapterland.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2017/11/US\\_FactsFigures\\_Flyer.pdf](https://chapterland.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2017/11/US_FactsFigures_Flyer.pdf)>.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Cornman, S., Zhou, L., Howell, M., Young, J. (2018). "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2015-16 (Fiscal Year 2016)" Accessed July 5, 2019. <<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019301.pdf>>.

<sup>237</sup> Rossen, Eric, and Katherine C. Cowan. "Improving Mental Health in Schools." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 96, no. 4 (2014): 8-13. Accessed March 12, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24376532>>.

to be “the largest de facto provider of mental health services.”<sup>238</sup> Concerns have manifested into developing solutions that assist students arriving to schools with “barriers to learning, related behavior and discipline problems, cultural disconnects between school staff, curriculum, and students and their families, and the conviction that failing to educate these students was bad for them, their families, and society.”<sup>239</sup> Further research supports increasing the number of available services for mental health by employing “a multitiered system of supports” which can be integrated into the learning environment.<sup>240</sup> The overarching intent of a “multitiered” system is to immediately address students with chronic or severe problems with continued support to reach “at-risk students”.<sup>241</sup> Addressing mental health concerns is a crucially important matter that should receive guidance at the state level. Since individual states contain vast regional differences, a pragmatic approach would offer state legislators the opportunity to address statewide concerns which may be regionally dependent.

Another factor to consider is the difficulty experienced by students that emigrate from non-English speaking countries. The disadvantage of not speaking English in American schools may create skewed performance results due to a misunderstanding of school curriculum thus leading to poor performance. The California Department of Education (CDE) website indicates that there are slightly less than 1.2 million English learners within the state’s public education system. This account for 19.3 percent of total public-school enrollment.<sup>242</sup> Several of the CDE’s objectives include ensuring students acquire full proficiency as quickly and effectively as possible in addition to

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<sup>238</sup> Foy, J.M. & Perrin, J. (2010). Enhancing pediatric mental health care: Strategies for preparing a community. *Pediatrics*, 125, S75-S86.

<sup>239</sup> Flaherty, L.T. & Osher, D. (2002). History of school-based mental health services. In M.D. Weist, S.W. Evans, & N.A. Lever (Eds.), *Handbook of school mental health advancing practice and research*. New York, NY: Springer. 11-22.

<sup>240</sup> Rossen, Eric, and Katherine C. Cowan. "Improving Mental Health in Schools." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 96, no. 4 (2014): 8-13. Accessed March 12, 2021. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24376532>>. 10.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>242</sup> CDE. "Facts about English Learners in California - CalEdFacts." *California Department of Education*. Fall (2018). Accessed July 22, 2019. <<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefelfacts.asp>>.

achieving the same rigorous academic standards required of all students. Certain programs have been implemented as a means of bridging the gap between native and non-native speakers. Program options include dual-language immersion, transitional or developmental programs, and structured English immersion.<sup>243</sup> Despite the programs available to equalize academic obstacles and boost fluency, California ranks towards the bottom on academic performance.<sup>244</sup> It can be expected that the additional burdens of teaching English in addition to diverting funding towards English programs deter student potential. This become more apparent since California ranks below the national average on spending per pupil. States that are required to educate students on the fundamentals of English should likely receive a greater amount of education funding to offset burdens that are not common in other states. Texas, Florida, and Nevada all face similar issues<sup>245</sup> and which can likely be attributed to performance problems stemming from having to teach English to non-native speakers and the budgetary expenses to fund such programs. Additionally, each of these states spends an inadequate amount per student that consistently falls below the national average. Reallocating state budgets to accommodate greater expenditures on English-learning programs may expediate the proficiency levels obtained by immigrants. The allotted amount of funding required to teach English will vary from state to state but should effectively reduce the timeline of students' reaching English proficiency. The state of New York has a large share of immigrants within its public education system, yet it spends double than California, Texas, Arizona, or Nevada. This can likely attribute to its near "average" ranking.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> DADS. "American FactFinder - Results." Data Access and Dissemination Systems. October 05, 2010. Accessed July 23, 2019. <[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_S1501&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_S1501&prodType=table)>.

<sup>245</sup> Camarota, S., Griffith, B., Ziegler, K. "Mapping the Impact of Immigration on Public Schools." CIS.org. Accessed July 23, 2019. <<https://cis.org/Report/Mapping-Impact-Immigration-Public-Schools>>.

<sup>246</sup> NCES. "The Condition of Education." *Nation Center for Education Statistics*. May (2019). Accessed July 23, 2019. <[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_coi.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp)>.

Another issue uncovered by scholars is the share of immigration leading to increases in private school enrollment. Astghik Mavisakalyan conveys from her publications that extensive immigration leads to increases in private school enrollments therefore negatively affecting the appropriations for public education.<sup>247</sup> Additionally, if students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are transferred from public schools to private schools, the ability to gain from advantaged peer groups is significantly diminished.<sup>248</sup> Conversely, this negatively impacts immigrants from a decrease in opportunities due to lower levels of funding.

### **Case Study Concluding Analysis**

The differences in state legislation is varies wildly depending on specific regions throughout the United States. As a result, previously discussed states were chosen based on existing policies that tend to deviate from the norm- both positively and negatively.

#### *Advancing State Policy*

If the government in Alabama began to initiate similar values towards treating all students equally regardless of racial differences, as observed in Massachusetts, it is probable that student performance will begin to improve. An argument can be made that exposure to other cultures, heritages, and backgrounds not only promotes civic-mindedness, but additionally broadens a level of understanding for unfamiliar backgrounds formed during early developmental years. This raises a possible correlation regarding civic-minded individuals having stronger academic performance. Although this thesis seeks to decentralize education, one solution that may be

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<sup>247</sup> Mavisakalyan, A. (2011). Immigration, Public Education Spending, and Private Schooling. *Southern Economic Journal*, 78(2), 420.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 420.



necessary includes involving the federal government if individual states are violating civil rights. The federal government can then strike down state legislation that is discriminatory in nature.

Under the old system of NCLB, school districts were essentially led to be penalized with a lesser amount of funding predicated on incredibly difficult academic standards. One possible solution that incentivizes teachers to improve performance might be the use of bonuses if overall school performance exceeds a certain threshold. If the top 10% of public schools outperformed the remaining 90%, there might be a noticeable improvement from students. Since each state has different thresholds of funding, the most logical solution would to compare public schools within the same county. Furthermore, as various counties in each state have differing levels of socioeconomic backgrounds, competition at the county level may drive performance and reward staff for improved performance. Historically, positive competition can drive performance and potentially promote unity among staff.

### *Efficient Spending*

Increased spending is not nor should ever be considered a feasible solution that can ameliorate the degraded performance of schools within a state. Addressing outdated policy proved to be a practical solution that bolstered the performance of students residing within the state of Kansas. Additionally, Kansas was not required to make any changes to spending while continuing to observe substantial improvements. Although this section does not cover every causal factor behind every successful state, there are a great deal of lessons that can be learned from the adaptability that resulted with desired improvements. The removal of wasteful expenditures with emphasis on accountability may prove to reduce preconceptions about how spending may affect student progression. Solutions to address wasteful expenditures would likely require third party agencies to

audit and keep track of state spending. Ultimately, strong fiscal responsibility with state funds must be in place to ensure the objectives and goals set by policymakers are achieved. The development of “checks and balances” for fiscal responsibility may be a worthy pursuit.

### *Regional Variables*

The varying nuances prevalent within individual states will require the development of specific solutions based on the needs of its students. If we assume that mental health is a problem found more commonly in certain regions of the United States, it should become the responsibility of state governments to research and implement resolutions that provide equal learning opportunities for all pupils. Developing strategies that help students combat mental stress and illness would likely have long-lasting effects and benefits that promote academic improvement.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the current education system, its predication on three durable shifts with the last few decades, and possible changes that can ameliorate ongoing issues from state to state. The effects of a public education system composed of: Pre-NCLB, NCLB, and ESSA, have underwent various suggestions theorized to improve state academic performance. The data provided indicate a number of ongoing issues that have yet to receive further solutions backed by legislative changes. Nonetheless, placing the power back into the hands of state governments may allow for greater emphasis to be placed on the needs of local counties. One important example that was referenced previously within this paper was the act of individual states removing themselves from Common Core. Empowerment to prevent students from exposure to ineffective curriculum should be a given right that individual states should exercise as required. If education reverts back to becoming a primary responsibility of states as it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as mentioned earlier in this

thesis, the federal government can retain the rights to intervene during cases involving the violation of civil rights.

The benefits of the newest system, ESSA, is propagated by decentralizing the grasp of the federal government- unless it becomes apparent that certain states are still underperforming than expected. Despite its inherent nature of being “new legislation”, it is definitely a vast improvement over the NCLB act. Removing any tendencies of “micro-management” NCLB may foster a much more productive approach toward fixing public education systems within each individual state. The next chapter of this thesis will delve into the effects of how the local government determine the progression of its students within American public education.

## CHAPTER 4

### LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND EDUCATION

#### Introduction

Government influence projected at the federal and state levels has continued to shift back and forth throughout recent history. Past policy indicates that government influence on education largely depends on the policy objectives of whomever serves as a sitting U.S. President. Although a majority of influence may stem from either the federal or state levels, it would be inaccurate to understate the effects of local governments and school boards with respect to academic performance. The relationship between academic achievement and casual factors that affect a local community may be perpetuated as a rigid dichotomy between overly bureaucratic tendencies and the perceived best interest of its students. Local communities can undoubtedly shape the effectiveness public schools and the trajectory of a student's academic career. Based on a cursory examination of various school districts within the United States, the largest variables that may affect student success include variables predicated on geographic location, school board members, socioeconomic influences, local tax rates, and the affluence of the surrounding community.<sup>249</sup>

This chapter shall examine the effects a local community can have on public education. It attempts to portray the influence of school districts with minimized influence exhibited by the federal and state government. The chapter seeks to ask whether local governments are fostering environments that enable students to achieve objectives defined by the National School Boards Association. These objectives include school boards exercising proper advocacy for public education in the legislative, legal, and public arenas. Additional objectives include achieving cost

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<sup>249</sup>Center For Public Justice. "How Are The Local, State And Federal Governments Involved In Education? Is This Involvement Just?" Accessed December 19, 2020.  
<[https://www.cpjjustice.org/public/page/content/cie\\_faq\\_levels\\_of\\_government](https://www.cpjjustice.org/public/page/content/cie_faq_levels_of_government)>.

efficiency and ensuring financial stability to pursue strategic direction and goal completion. Although the National School Boards Association is not an official extension of the US Government, its mission is deemed pertinent to student success supported by its relevant and defined guidelines.

This chapter contains three case studies (Adlai E. Stevenson High School District, Eanes Independent School District, and the Lower Kuskokwim School District) to demonstrate the profound impact a local community can have on district performance. It underlines the potential ineffectiveness of overspending and highlights the necessary relationship that must exist between a district and its local community. It shall be concluded that local districts with self-established performance guidelines that detail goals, plans, and objectives tend to result with greater academic performance when compared to underperforming municipalities. It is difficult to establish reasoning that would remove a district's intent from pursuing objectives that directly benefit its schools. The connection between school districts and defined academic objectives becomes more apparent based on policy implementation at the local level. Schools with clearly defined academic goals and objectives often insinuate a desire to pursue improvement for its student body. This chapter shall conclude with an overview of the three case studies that describe how local districts should efficiently function to maximize resource allocation. Failing to update policies at the local level can be detrimental to the effectiveness of individual schools. It typically results with ineffective fiscal and performance management.

This chapter begins by explaining the traditional role given to local districts and its initial establishment during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Next, a literature review dissects reports and books regarding landmark policy changes and how these changes were executed. Afterwards, three case studies emphasize positive and negative attributes that tend to have the largest determination of a districts potential to succeed or fail. Upon the completion of the case studies, it shall be argued that local communities and familial support must be present for a student to have the greatest probability of

success. Although an infinite number of variables may appear to exist making it difficult to quantify success, the importance of community and family support cannot be understated.

### **Traditional Roles of Local Districts**

The local community and its school board members determine standard operating procedures and its future planning. Certain states have departments of education that typically create lines to define school districts whereas other states may utilize geographic lines to determine school districts based on defined parishes, boroughs, and counties.<sup>250</sup> As an example, the California School Boards Association seeks to “ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities.”<sup>251</sup> Fulfilling these roles is achieved by assigning five major responsibilities: “setting direction, establishing an effective and efficient structure, providing support, ensuring accountability, and providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools.”<sup>252</sup> Similar objectives can be observed when California is compared to “legislative opposite” states, such as North Dakota. The North Dakota Department of Public instruction has defined its three core values to serve the students of its state through the following goals: “build relationships, cultivate opportunity, and inspire growth.”<sup>253</sup>

The divergence of objectives will vary from state to state; however, it is clear that coordination remains an important cornerstone to the educational framework of states attempting to equalize the opportunities given to its pupils. Certain regions throughout the United States have capitalized on collaborative efforts to amplify performance whereas districts with archaic legislative

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> CSBA. "Governance and Policy Resources." *California School Boards Association*. Accessed December 19, 2020. <<https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/EffectiveGovernance/RoleandResponsibilitiesofSBMs.aspx>>.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> NDDPI. "About Us." *North Dakota Department of Public Instruction*. Accessed December 19, 2020. <<https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/EffectiveGovernance/RoleandResponsibilitiesofSBMs.aspx>>.

processes fail to adapt based comparative case studies later in this chapter.

### *Brief History of District Policy*

In 1837, the very first State Board of Education was established in Massachusetts. Upon its establishment and the follow-on establishment of state normal schools in 1839, a desire to improve the condition of public schools was rapidly pursued. The act establishing the State Board of Education was originally developed (but not enacted) to give the Board “power to encourage or provide for the better education of common-school teachers of both sexes, in such manner as to them may seem expedient for the promotion of the object; and for that purpose may expend annually during the pleasure of the Legislature. . .”<sup>254</sup> Although the first board was established in 1837, it is important to note that the first racially integrated high school in Massachusetts (along with the first high school in the United States) was founded as Lowell High School in 1831.<sup>255</sup>

### *Evolving Strategies*

Changes experienced at school districts can partially be attributed to financial factors that result from education reform at the local level. Local level reformation falls into two categories: “local level initiatives responding to the challenge to reform America’s schools, and the impact of state education reform mandates on local school districts.”<sup>256</sup> As school districts must fulfill educational program requirements mandated by the state, appropriate changes must align with mandated initiatives. In the event a state is unable to fulfill the gap between funding for imposed mandates, the responsibility falls to the local district level. One difficult aspect with exercising

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<sup>254</sup> Wright, Frank W. "The Evolution of the Normal Schools." *The Elementary School Journal* 30, no. 5 (1930): 363-71. Accessed December 18, 2020. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/994569>>.

<sup>255</sup> American Ancestors. "Lowell, MA: High School Students, 1837-1878." Accessed December 19, 2020. <<https://www.americanancestors.org/search/databasesearch/2763/lowell-ma-high-school-students-1837-1878>>.

<sup>256</sup> Wright, Linus, and Deborah Inman. "The Impact of Education Reform on Local School Districts." *Journal of Education Finance* 14, no. 1 (1988): 7-17. Accessed December 18, 2020. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40703649>>.

mandates is that states are required to ensure equality despite economic disparities stemming from socioeconomic differences among districts.<sup>257</sup>

### *Varied Performance*

Proactive superintendents may influence the difference in schools that have higher graduation standards that exceed state-imposed minimums. One landmark event that marked a significant milestone in American educational progression was the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. The context of this report shall be addressed within this chapter's literature review and will provide further guidance that illustrates the importance of strong district leadership. It additionally details the importance for key individuals to explore proactive steps towards future district improvement. Moreover, districts that generate progress follow several basic principles that would advance any other school district. These principles include: "reform can be initiated at the local level", "most institutions have fat that can be trimmed", "local leaders can be enlisted to support additional reforms despite political obstacles", and lastly, "often educational reforms can save money rather than cost money."<sup>258</sup> It may difficult to observe and document the motivation at the individual level often driving the pursuit towards attaining these types of objectives, however, it highlights basic doctrinal statements that should be incorporated into district objectives at all local levels.

### **Literature Review**

Although the United States contains thousands of school districts, the literature surrounding the performance of individual schools focuses on three primary factors: landmark changes of local policy, future roles of local policymakers, and the effects of federal contributions to high-income

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 11.



school districts.

### *Landmark Changes of Local Policy*

During the 1930s, American school districts began a process of consolidation under the presumption that larger schools would equate to improved performance based on “economies of scale and specialization.” It served as a response to poor academic performance at the district level and the changing political landscape involved with how education was funded. During the 40 year period between 1940 and 1980, over 100,000 school districts were removed based on principles of consolidation.<sup>259</sup> The decentralized and informal nature of small “community” schools transformed into largely bureaucratic organizations with growing evidence that performance was not necessarily improving.<sup>260</sup> Past legislation discussed within this paper, such as *No Child Left Behind*, identify biases that benefit larger districts based on blanket approaches towards fixing a poorly performing education system. The identified problem with creating excessively larger school districts is its incorporation of student subgroups defined by varying degrees of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.<sup>261</sup> As a district continues to grow in size, the adaptability of the district unfolds into an inevitable decline when meeting the specific academic needs of its students.<sup>262</sup> There are exceptions to the statement, however, this is not the norm.<sup>263</sup>

One report that developed into a durable shift in modern American educational history was titled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The report uncovered a number of risks underlining a severe decline with the performance of American students. Some “concerning” issues written include: excessive illiteracy among American adults, noticeable drops in Scholastic Aptitude

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<sup>259</sup> Robertson, Frank W. "Economies of scale for large school districts: A national study with local implications." *The Social Science Journal* 44, no. 4 (2007), 620-629. doi:10.1016/j.soscij.2007.10.005. p 621.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 621.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 626.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 626.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 626.

Tests, and a 72% increase in remedial mathematics courses at 4-year universities.<sup>264</sup> The number of findings within the report is much more comprehensive and covers a much wider range of problems. Ultimately, it was concluded that declines of educational performance are largely due to inadequacies in how the education process is executed.<sup>265</sup> Four vital aspects of the educational process include: “content”, “expectations”, “time”, and “teaching.”<sup>266</sup> Each of these categories contain specific attributes that undermine the capability of public schools.

A range of students between ages 12-17 reveal that “secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose.”<sup>267</sup> Other concerns stem from “non-essential” curriculum, or content, becoming a priority rather than core classes that historically guide a student’s academic trajectory. Although the report does not explain the specifics of courses that are “more removed”, the numbers indicate a much greater number of students have opted for “general track” classes than previous generations. The number of students that complete more arduous courses, such as mathematics, are much lower than normal.

Expectations are defined in the report based on the degree of knowledge, abilities, and skills that individuals graduating from high school or college should ideally possess.<sup>268</sup> Possession of such skills are predicated on the amount of “time, hard work, behavior, self-discipline, and motivation” that are pertinent for advanced student achievement.<sup>269</sup> More deficiencies observed within this category at the local levels include a lesser amount of homework and classroom time on technical subjects. The overarching theme within this section of the report resorts to identifying a decrease in standards with both college acceptance and the ease of completing assignments without needing to

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<sup>264</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform Report*. 1983.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 18.

review assigned reading materials. This becomes a much greater issue with less time spent on instructional materials and the lack of teacher participation when writing textbooks.

Three aspects of time management are also ineffective to maximizing efficiency. This includes a significantly lesser number of American students spending time on school work, ineffective use of time in the classroom, schools failing to develop students to harness study skills, and the lack of willingness to allocate a proper amount of time on school work. Other comparisons indicate that other “industrialized” countries require a higher number of days at school along with longer days. Practical skills outside of conventional academics are also required of students to the same extent as core courses with respect to graduation requirements.

The fourth finding, the profession of teaching, was identified as a career option that was unable to attract gifted students. Other concerns identify teacher preparation programs as needing enormous improvements, the unsuitability of professional working life, and a shortage of teachers in important fields.<sup>270</sup> An in-depth analysis of school teachers in the United States determine that a large majority graduated at the bottom of their respective high school or college class. This trend manifests into 50% of newly employed teachers not having the requisite qualifications to teach math, science, or English with less than 33% of U.S. high schools having qualified physics teachers.<sup>271</sup>

An important lesson within the report is its reference to how the United States spends its education budget when compared to other first-world nations. Five years after *A Nation at Risk* was published, the United States reportedly spent 6.7% of its gross national product for education, whereas Japan spent 5.6% and Germany with 4.5%.<sup>272</sup> Despite spending more on education than

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>272</sup> Wright, Linus, and Deborah Inman. "The Impact of Education Reform on Local School Districts." *Journal of Education Finance* 14, no. 1 (1988): 7-17. Accessed December 18, 2020. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40703649>>. 16.

any other nation at the time of publication, Germany and Japan continued to bolster their student's achievement scores while far surpassing American students within courses defined as "critical".<sup>273</sup>

### *Future Roles of Local Policymakers*

Based on data extracted from the 1983 report, positive impacts on education reform will require effective district leadership to emphasize the importance of cost efficiency and accountability.<sup>274</sup> Additional funding can be argued as a beneficial component of improvement, however, a lack of oversight may lead to inefficiency and poor investments regarding district financial decisions. The U.S. Department of Education International Affairs Office outlines the importance of local communities operating schools in accordance with state laws and policy while incorporating educational policies devised at the local level.<sup>275</sup>

Literature produced by the United Nations pertaining to the generalities of local government inquire about the obstacles existing at local levels that force legislators to overcome inequity and exclusion.<sup>276</sup> One of the questions asked within the article seeks to provide answers about: how can local governance empower women and parents within poor households, disabled or other groups that are deemed disabled?<sup>277</sup> Individuals, particularly males, are described as the typical leaders that dominate educational governance with backgrounds derived from greater socioeconomic status. The disparities that perpetuate obstacles are problems that require intervening policy to remove social exclusion within the development of policy. Although the report is written to incorporate a global

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>275</sup> USNEI. "Organization of U.S. Education: The Local Role." *U.S. Department of Education*. Last modified February 2008. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/local.doc>.

<sup>276</sup> Khan, Faryal. "Educational Governance at Local Levels: Policy Paper & Evaluation." 2007. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000154408>. 4.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 4.

audience referencing the styles of governance in various nations, there are a number of valuable lessons that can be embedded with the future direction of local education policy.

Educational decentralization is a growing trend that calls for change throughout local governance by incorporating an analysis of how international agencies affect the reform process.<sup>278</sup> It necessitates the framework and accountability to reflect a system of check and balances.<sup>279</sup> The transparency of a decentralized system when developing action plans to assert desired changes requires continuous assessments with additional monitoring, support, and training. New initiatives should effectively represent the desires of parents and members of the local communities<sup>280</sup>

### *Effects of Federal Contributions to High-Income School Districts*

Lower-income school districts are classified as “Title 1” and receive a greater amount of funding from the federal government. The relationship between Title 1 schools and the federal government insists that it is compensatory in nature with little involvement outside of providing funding.<sup>281</sup> Although the federal government and individual state governments support funding through tax credits and tax deductions for educational costs, policies of this nature usually benefit districts with higher-income.<sup>282</sup> Failing to incorporate how tax policy affects the distribution of funds from the federal government can largely underestimate the role of the federal government while “overestimating the progressive nature of federal aid to schools.”<sup>283</sup> One example includes, “the deductibility of state and local taxes from the federal income tax is a federal contribution to schools. An individual in the 28% federal income tax bracket, who pays US\$1000 in deductible state and

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>281</sup> Loeb, Susanna, and Miguel Socias. "Federal contributions to high-income school districts: the use of tax deductions for funding K-12 education." *Economics of Education Review* 23, no. 1 (2004), 85-94. doi:10.1016/s0272-7757(03)00064-5.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 85.

local taxes for schools may deduct the US\$1000 from the taxable income and reduce his/her federal tax bill by US\$280. Thus, of the US\$1000 going to schools, the federal government pays US\$280 and the individual pays US\$720.”<sup>284</sup> The data utilized to substantiate these claims was retrieved from the School District Data Book, the IRS Statistics of Income-Public Use Tax File for the tax year of 1989, and the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples.<sup>285</sup>

Ultimately, deducting local and state taxes channels federal funding to taxpayers lowers the cost of education for individuals that itemize taxes.<sup>286</sup> This results in a greater demand for school spending. Based on a calculation consisting of price reductions, price-elasticity for education expenditures, and expenditure levels per district, it is indicative that demands for school spending are increased with greater disparities between lower and higher income districts.<sup>287</sup> Based on voter models, higher-income school districts averaged an increased demand of 3.4% whereas lower-income districts averaged an increased demand of 0.4%.<sup>288</sup> The data used in these calculations from 1989 indicate a stark contrast between the spending of lower-income and higher-income schools. Because the federal government gives larger sums of funding to individual districts through tax deductions, it can be argued that the federal government plays a much larger role with school spending than previously indicated. The tax system in place “masks the true distribution of taxes paid and educational spending received by different communities.”<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 94.

## Methodology of Research

### *Case Study Selection*

Three school districts were selected for the case study analysis portion of this chapter. Due to the author's inability to conduct independent research on various districts due to resource and time limitations, an outside source was used to determine school district rankings. Based on a comprehensive source of information derived from the Department of Education, U.S. Census, and the FBI, the website, *Niche*, concluded that the number one ranked district in the United States was Adlai E. Stevenson High School District in Illinois. Other top-ranking districts that shall be analyzed include Eanes Independent School District in Texas.<sup>290</sup> The first two districts were chosen for the purpose of case studies due to geographical distances and their superior ranking to every other school district in the United States. The third district chosen is the Lower Kuskokwim School District located in Alaska. While Lower Kuskokwim School District contains similar degrees of higher spending on individual students, it trails in performance and literacy rates.

### *History*

Part of a district's background will be examined to fully understand its early roots. Additionally, its background is analyzed to determine any unique circumstances affect its ability to retain a top ten position out of all school districts in the United States. Historical aspects include the history of the district's inception and which factors contributed to its overall growth and development. Other considerations include how school district boundaries are determined and any roles played by local government officials. Conversely, the history of a school may provide insight for underperforming school systems, such as the Lower Kuskokwim School District.

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<sup>290</sup> Niche. "2021 Best School Districts in America." *niche.com*. Accessed December 21, 2020. <<https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-school-districts/>>.

### *Assessment of Funding*

Some districts have capitalized on using funding outside of conventional sources. Local property taxes among other available options may prove to foster a greater number of educational programs and extracurricular activities that place these districts into a higher tier of performance. Other considerations include the socioeconomic backgrounds of the families within the school district boundaries along with the funding that goes towards teacher salaries.

### *Extenuating Variables*

Any extenuating variables may include considerations outside of a district's historical roots or present-day funding. This may include legislative policy that directly impacted the school's performance to unique advantages that can be attributed to continued success. As an example, it may also include a diverse demographic background of students that may not speak English as their native language.

## **Case Study 1: Adlai E. Stevenson High School District**

### *History of Adlai E. Stevenson High School District*

As the most recently number one ranked district in the country, Adlai E. Stevenson High School district was initially opened on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965.<sup>291</sup> Its corresponding village, Lincolnshire, is a northern suburb in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>292</sup> As of the most recent census, the village has a population of 7,572, a median household income of \$116,316, a poverty rate of 5.4%, and lastly, 70.1% of its

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<sup>291</sup> Stevenson High School. "About." *District 125*. Accessed December 22, 2020. <<https://www.d125.org/about>>.

<sup>292</sup> Lincolnshire Village. "Lincolnshire village, Illinois." U.S. Census Bureau. Last modified 2019. <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=1600000US1743666>>.



residents have a Bachelor's Degree.<sup>293</sup> The village is 83.5% White, 14.6% Asian, and less than 2% of all other races.<sup>294</sup> During its official dedication, its first superintendent claimed that it was, “born of a conflict, nurtured by adversity and destined for greatness.”<sup>295</sup> The dispute that preceded the newly established school was based on growing disagreements between eastern and western sections of the district regarding the type of focus the school would pursue. Specifically, the eastern section (known as Adlai E. Stevenson High School) would develop curriculum in pursuit of a greater college preparation.<sup>296</sup> As the school began to encounter difficulties without a sitting principal in addition to logistical errors preventing supplies from arriving as expected, the school resorted to requesting donations and support from the local community. Its initial framework proved to be enduring as numerous faculty members poured many “off the clock” hours into their pursuit of constructing “the best high school in the country.”<sup>297</sup> Years after the doors opened to the school, a pivotal shift required careful adaptation upon its review of the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*.

The school began to adopt an “egalitarian” model that sought to achieve opportunities for all students rather than imposing limitations that only affected its “best and brightest” students. Once the report was released, the school welcomed a new principal in conjunction with data extracted from the report to serve as a “springboard” that would recommit the school to excellence. It developed the local community to increasingly focus “on ensuring a quality education for its children.”<sup>298</sup> Part of the reform that led to the districts eventual success was to ask the question, “what do we do when students don’t learn?”<sup>299</sup> The multilayered response was designed to implement “a safety net of policies and procedures meant to catch students who were struggling

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Stevenson High School. "About." *District 125*. Accessed December 22, 2020. <<https://www.d125.org/about>>.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

academically and otherwise.” To resolve any potential issues with student performance, the school resorted to utilizing full-time adult tutors for with support from study classes in addition to strong communication among teachers and counselors. Tutoring is available in five different subjects and is a requirement if students receive unsatisfactory grades. It remains mandatory until satisfactory progression occurs.<sup>300</sup> Strategies of intervention were added with grading periods that lasted six weeks rather than nine weeks in length. This led to parents of students receiving a report on progress in three-week increments. On top of all of these initiatives, innovative programs sought to assist students transitioning into high school grades.

Another early strategy was to remove the conventional decision to allow only the top 10% of students to enroll and participate within college-level courses. District leadership desired more students to take Advanced Placement courses to embrace an equivalent schedule taken by first-year college students. Its overarching intent presently is for all students to have completed at least one Advanced Placement course prior to graduation. Approximately 75% of graduating seniors have completed at least one Advanced Placement course with self-reported scores as “consistently high”. Part of the growth enjoyed by the school stems from students opting out of elective courses to favor core classes that improve admission chances into leading universities throughout the United States.

### *Assessment of Funding*

The amount of funding received by Adlai E. Stevenson High School places it at an astonishing advantage when compared to the standard amount of funding received and funds spent per student averaged throughout the state of Illinois.<sup>301</sup> The present system in Illinois relies on

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<sup>300</sup> Stevenson High School. "Tutoring Support Programs." District 125. Accessed March 22, 2021. <<https://www.d125.org/academics/tutoring>>.

<sup>301</sup> Sadovi, Kyra. "Property Taxes and Inequitable Spending: A Survey of Education Funding in Illinois." Illinois Undergraduate Law Review. Last modified August 6, 2019. <<https://www.uiucuglawreview.web.illinois.edu/wp/2019/08/06/property-taxes-and-inequitable-spending-a-survey-of-education-funding-in-illinois/>>.

property taxes and fails to promote equity among the average student residing within the state of Illinois. Advantages observed within communities of higher socioeconomic status, such as Stevenson High School, result in a multitude of opportunities and after-school programs that are not available to students in low-income districts.

Specific numbers that define Stevenson High School's ability to offer students countless resources stem from its financial capacity at 168%.<sup>302</sup> Supported by the highest property taxes in the state, the local community adds a significant portion to its annual budget. With a financial adequacy target at \$50 million, the district recently operated with a budget of \$84 million.<sup>303</sup> This results in the school receiving \$19,965 per student equating to 288.9% higher than the state average per student.<sup>304</sup>

### *Extenuating Variables*

Important considerations that may factor into higher performing students include only a 9.3% percent of teachers employed during their first or second years in addition to smaller ratios. Presently, the student-teacher ratio is 15 to 1 whereas the national average is 17 to 1. Additionally, the average teacher salary within the district is \$93,403 with student funding at \$27,205.<sup>305</sup> Higher salaries, greater spending per pupil, and smaller classroom ratios all surpass the national average.

## **Case Study 2: Eanes Independent School District**

### *History of Eanes Independent School District*

The history of the Eanes Independent School District dates back to 1872 when Robert Eanes had a school built on his property. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the school underwent a series

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Niche District 125. "Explore Adlai E. Stevenson High School District No. 125." Niche. Last modified October 13, 2020. <<https://www.niche.com/k12/d/adlai-e-stevenson-high-school-district-no-125-il/>>.

of changes that eventually led to Eanes residents either joining the Austin Independent School District or forming their own school system. Voters opted for independence and on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the Eanes Independent School District was established. Nearly six decades later, it would receive the classification as one of the top districts in the country.<sup>306</sup> The district is located in unincorporated Travis County, Texas; an area located in Greater Austin.<sup>307</sup> As of the most recent census, Travis County, Texas, has a population of 1,226,805, a median household income of \$75,887, a poverty rate of 12%, and lastly, 50% of its residents have a Bachelor's Degree.<sup>308</sup> The county is 72.5% White, 8.3% Black, 6.7% Asian, and 12.5% of all other races.<sup>309</sup>

The mission of the district is that, "the Eanes community is vitally committed to educational excellence that prepares and inspires all students for life-long success by engaging each student in rigorous academic experiences and enriching opportunities."<sup>310</sup> Priorities defined by the Board include, "a guaranteed viable curriculum and experience, student support, social emotional learning, operations and long-range planning, and community engagement."<sup>311</sup> Further, priorities within the district are outlined by defined instructional and operational goals.

Instructional goals are rooted through emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and advancing interdisciplinary education opportunities. Part of these initiatives extend towards creating advantages for students along with promoting Spanish immersion programs to equalize opportunities among students. Overseeing these changes with developing technologies is expected to foster enhanced learning environments. Supporting students through a multi-tiered system is another initiative expected to help enrolled pupils. Reassessments of student programs

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<sup>306</sup> Eanes Westlake. "History." *Eanes ISD - A K-12 Independent School District in Austin, Texas*. Accessed January 11, 2021. <https://www.eanesisd.net/district/history>.

<sup>307</sup> Travis County. "Travis County, Texas." U.S. Census Bureau. Last modified 2019. <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=05000000US48453>>.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

along with refined team processes that account for social, emotional, and behavior needs are analyzed when developing appropriate strategies to meet student needs. These developments extend to incorporate special education requirements by reviewing resources, staffing, augmented instructional delivery models, improved strategies, and adherence to special education program recommendations.<sup>312</sup> Lastly, reaching out to ensure the wellness of community members is pursued through education and resources that promote emotional health.<sup>313</sup>

Operational goals emphasize basic operations, long-range planning, and engaging the community. Pursuing these goals require long-range planning, safeguarding staff, students, and resources, and developing priorities for upcoming budget concerns. Community engagement requires the development of customized information for alumni, residents, and local businesses to project messages and goals of the school district. Lastly, the fostering of relationships with key constituents and authentic engagement with parents is anticipated to strengthen community relations.

### *Assessment of Funding*

Most of the funding received by Eanes Independent School District comes from local school property taxes with supplemental funding from the state. State funding is calculated through a formula that accounts for extenuating circumstances such as “limited English proficiency and special education.”<sup>314</sup> As local funding increases, the state’s contributions tend to decrease. Three funds that cover operating expenses include the General Fund, the Bond Program, and the Debt Service Fund.

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<sup>312</sup> Eanes Westlake. "Mission & Goals." *Eanes ISD - A K-12 Independent School District in Austin, Texas*. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://www.eanesisd.net/district/goals>>.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Eanes ISD. "The Facts: How is the school district funded?" *Eanes ISD - A K-12 Independent School District in Austin, Texas*. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1580495901/eanesisdnet/vruvmbvgupohzlpio5wi/EISDfactsfinance.pdf>>.

Maintenance and Operations tax is largely distributed into the General Fund which covers “day-to-day operations of the district, including payroll, programming, maintenance, security, supplies, etc.”<sup>315</sup> The Bond Program requires voter approval and allows for capital improvements to be financed with payments made over a set period of time. It cannot be used for salaries and must be spent on only authorized expenses approved by voters. Historically, Eanes Independent School District retires debt early or resorts to refinancing to pursue more favorable terms and conditions. Strategic planning has allowed the district to eliminate several millions of dollars of debt by employing various approaches. Lastly, the Debt Service Fund is financed by the Interest and Sinking tax. “Debt Service pays for the district’s debt, taken on through the sale of bonds for capital improvement projects such as school renovations, technology, school buses, etc.”<sup>316</sup> One important caveat is its inability to be used for operational expenses.

### *Extenuating Variables*

Other considerations that likely drive improved performance include the experience of teachers and the ratio of students. The most recent data available indicates that the current student-teacher ratio is 14 to 1 with only 5.4% of teachers of starting their first or second year with the school. Another important consideration is the average teacher’s salary equating to \$51,587.<sup>317</sup> Unlike the Adlai E. Stevenson High School District, the slightly below average pay for teachers in conjunction with student expenses exceeding the national average at \$24,109 seem to garner desired academic performance.

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Eanes ISD - Niche. "Eanes Independent School District." Niche. Last modified November 11, 2017. <<https://www.niche.com/k12/d/eanes-independent-school-district-tx/>>.

The quality of teachers is synonymous with producing higher quality graduates. The average teacher has approximately 13 years of experience with over 50% of the teaching faculty at over 11+ years of experience. Additionally, 42% of teachers have attained advanced degrees.<sup>318</sup> Other variables that may hold a correlation with district performance include only 2.7% of the population having the classification as “economically disadvantaged” and a drop-out rate of less than 0.2%.<sup>319</sup>

### **Case Study 3: Lower Kuskokwim School District**

Unlike the past two school districts reviewed, the Lower Kuskokwim School district is presently performing poorly. One of the largest problems facing the district are the results of only 9% of students testing with minimum proficiency in math and only 8% of students testing with minimum proficiency in reading.<sup>320</sup>

#### *History of Lower Kuskokwim School District*

Located approximately 400 miles west of Anchorage via air transportation, the rural city of Bethel contains one of the lowest performing school districts within the United States. Part of the district contains the Kuskokwim River Delta along with the coast of the Bering Sea.<sup>321</sup> As of the most recent census, the city has a population of 18,386, a median household income of \$53,553, a poverty rate of 23.5%, and lastly, 11.9% of its residents have a Bachelor’s Degree.<sup>322</sup> The city is 10.3% White, 1.0% Black, 83.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.0% Asian, and 5% of all other races.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Eanes ISD - District. "Our District." Eanes ISD - A K-12 Independent School District in Austin, Texas. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://www.eanesisd.net/district>>.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Lower Kuskokwim School District - Niche. "Explore Lower Kuskokwim School District." Niche. Last modified April 29, 2017. <<https://www.niche.com/k12/d/lower-kuskokwim-school-district-ak/>>.

<sup>321</sup> LKSD. "About." Lower Kuskokwim School District. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://www.lksd.org/about>>.

<sup>322</sup> Bethel City. "Bethel Census Area, Alaska." U.S. Census Bureau. Last modified 2019. <<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bethelcensusareaalaska/PST045219>>.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

Supporting up to 22 villages and six Bethel schools, the district covers an approximate geographical area of 22,000 square miles. The district was officially established in 1976 and is the largest rural school district in the state. Based on its location, the district is classified as a “Regional Educational Attendance Area” (REAA).<sup>324</sup>

Its mission is designed to “ensure bilingual, culturally appropriate and effective education for all students, thereby providing them with the opportunity to be responsible, productive citizens.”<sup>325</sup>

A cursory review of the school board’s policy manual outlines a range of sections including its philosophy, school district goals, student learning goals, and a slew of other items that detail the intricacies of report cards to service animal requirements. The district emphasizes culturally responsive education by exhibiting high cultural proficiency to allow its students to become successful individuals. The school board acknowledges the importance of the local community and its integration with ensuring that needs are met and resources are utilized effectively. State policy serves as its primary guideline in pursuit of these objectives.

### *Assessment of Funding*

Most of Alaska’s funding for its schools comes from the state government rather than reliance on local property taxes as discussed within the previous two case studies. The state legislature designs a funding formula which distributes funds accordingly. In addition to state funding, a large portion of school funding is received from the federal government for “impact aid and special title programs.”<sup>326</sup> Schools within designated “Rural Education Attendance Areas” receive their entire funding from the state primarily because these “Unorganized Boroughs” have no

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<sup>324</sup> Alaska DOE. "Budgets & Actual Reporting." Alaska Department of Education. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://education.alaska.gov/schoolfinance/budgetsactual>>.

<sup>325</sup> LKSD. "Home." Lower Kuskokwim School District. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://www.lksd.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=98512&pageId=98520>>.

<sup>326</sup> AASB. "Introduction to School Finance." Association of Alaska School Boards – Advocates for Alaska's Youth. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://aasb.org/school-finance/>>.



means of collecting nor sustaining a tax base.<sup>327</sup> Districts within defined incorporated areas must “contribute to their schools, either through local taxes or in-kind contributions.”<sup>328</sup> Funding can be raised beyond minimum needs assuming it falls within prescribed guidance from the state.

Alaska Statute 14.17 sets the standard for state aid based on the “average daily membership” (ADM) or the number of full-time students enrolled in the school. The ADM is calculated into the Base Student Allocation and incorporates a series of variables that identifies distribution of \$1B to public elementary schools in Alaska. After funding is distributed, the school board is responsible for ensuring financial management supports school programs. For the sake of efficiency, it is expected that the Board actively plans the most feasible budget procedures along with expenditure guidance to maximize educational returns.<sup>329</sup> Specific Alaskan state law requires audits prior to October 1<sup>st</sup> of each school year. Failing to abide by State law may lead to the state commissioner withholding payments of state funds with districts that fail to provide a certified copy of the yearly audit.<sup>330</sup>

The district far exceeds the national average of expenses per students by providing \$42,248 per pupil- an amount that equates to more than \$30,000 above the national average. These expenses are broken into 41% of funding going into instruction, 54% for support services, and the remaining 5% to “other”.<sup>331</sup> Based on an audit report for fiscal year 2021, the district received over \$94.5M in funding for instructional functions and \$123.5M in funding for non-instructional functions.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> AASB. "Introduction to School Finance." Association of Alaska School Boards – Advocates for Alaska's Youth. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://aasb.org/school-finance/>>.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Lower Kuskokwim School District - Niche. "Explore Lower Kuskokwim School District." Niche. Last modified April 29, 2017. <<https://www.niche.com/k12/d/lower-kuskokwim-school-district-ak/>>.

<sup>332</sup> Alaska DOE. "Budgets & Actual Reporting." Alaska Department of Education. Accessed January 11, 2021. <<https://education.alaska.gov/schoolfinance/budgetsactual>>.

### *Extenuating Variables*

Other considerations that may result with lowered percentages on math and reading proficiency may be attributed to the socioeconomic background of its students. Out of 4,249 students attending the school district, 90.5% qualify for free or reduced lunches.<sup>333</sup> The most recent data available indicates that the current student-teacher ratio is 15 to 1 with only 8.8% of teachers of starting their first or second year with the school.

### **Analysis of District Performance**

Within the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Education exists the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU). Based on collaborative efforts between the ISU and the Reform Support Network (RSN), a series of guidelines provide “collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to individual States to enable reform initiatives.”<sup>334</sup>

According to the RSN, performance management is defined as a “systemic approach to ensure quality and progress toward organizational goals by methodically and routinely monitoring the connection between the strategies underway and the outcomes sought.”<sup>335</sup> The framework supporting performance management is broken down into four steps: “goal setting, resource alignment, performance data tracking and accountability for results.”<sup>336</sup> The principles of performance management can be applied to whether or not the three districts studied are actively employing initiatives to drive school performance.

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<sup>333</sup> Lower Kuskokwim School District - Niche. "Explore Lower Kuskokwim School District." Niche. Last modified April 29, 2017. <https://www.niche.com/k12/d/lower-kuskokwim-school-district-ak/>.

<sup>334</sup> U.S. DOE. "Race to the Top Resources." *U.S. Department of Education*. Last modified July 24, 2013. <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/units/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/index.html>>.

<sup>335</sup> Reform Support Network. "Leading Indicators for School Improvement: A Review of State Education Agency Practices." U.S. Department of Education. Accessed January 12, 2021. <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/units/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/leadingindforschoolimprov.pdf>>.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

### *Goal Setting*

Adlai E. Stevenson High School District: The history of Adlai E. Stevenson High School District and its present status as one of the nation's highest performing school districts illustrates an ideal model of how public education should be executed. There appear to be a number of significant advantages that place the district in a higher tier with opportunities and resources that tend to be out of reach for the "average" American school district. Nonetheless, the high school has a long-lasting history of goals originating from its inception. Since the 1960's, the school has sought to ensure a quality education for all students by developing multi-layered "safety nets" that incorporate local community support to assist any struggling students. Additionally, the desire to enable to students to participate in Advanced Placement courses places students into unique opportunities that allow college to be a much more manageable experience. This specific strategy strays from the norm that previously allowed only the top 10% of students to enroll in college-level courses.

Eanes Independent School District: Eanes Independent School District creates a clear distinction between its instructional and operational goals to maximize the effectiveness of its School Board's priorities. Instructional goals are concise and utilize supplemental technologies to develop students with developed learning environments. The school uses the local community to assist with promoting emotional health and supplemental resources for overall wellness. Operational goals look well into the future to ensure that financial budgets are developed and maximized to the fullest extent. In addition to instructional goals, members of the community along with engaging parents are incorporated to improve the relationship with the local community. The overall adequacy of school goals is clearly outlined and pursued to the fullest extent.

Lower Kuskokwim School District: Established during the 1970s, the Lower Kuskokwim School District outlines its mission and goals with emphasis on accounting for the unique diversity of its students. The school follows Alaska state policy as its guidance for the pursuit of its defined

goals along with acknowledging the role of the local community. Although similarities exist between its goals and the other districts, the school appears to fall short of its intent based on low math and reading proficiency levels.

### *Resource Alignment*

Adlai E. Stevenson High School District: The district arguably receives an “unfair” advantage with the redistribution of property taxes at the local level to bolster fiscal year budgets. As a result, a greater amount of funding is allocated to its student populace. With a target adequacy budget of \$50M, its excess of \$34M result in a much larger amount of spending on extracurricular programs after meeting baseline needs. Compared to Title 1 school districts, the Stevenson High School district enjoys benefits unavailable to lower income areas.

Eanes Independent School District: Similar to Adlai E. Stevenson High School District, Eanes Independent School District receives a great deal of funding from local property taxes of residents with high socioeconomic backgrounds. The funding used to operate the school is broken into differing budgets with distinct purposes thus demonstrating efficiency. Additionally, certain funds reflect the desire of voters that must approve any expenditures of certain funds- such as the Bond Program. The district takes a proactive approach towards minimizing waste by paying back debt with efficient timelines.

Lower Kuskokwim School District: Although funding for students is not an issue with the Lower Kuskokwim School District (it averages approximately \$30K above the national average), it does not perform at the same degree of excellence when compared to the previous two case studies. It presently receives 74% of “total revenue” from the State of Alaska, 23% from the Federal

Government, and only 3% from local sources.<sup>337</sup> It pays no interest on debts and expends most of its funding on “instructional expenditures”.

### *Performance Data Tracking*

Adlai E. Stevenson High School District: Stevenson High School District takes a proactive approach towards ensuring students are aware of their continual progress. Rather than utilizing its former grading period of nine-weeks, it uses six-weeks to finalize a grading period backed by three-week progress reports. By keeping tabs on student progress at much shorter intervals, it becomes more clear which students can benefit from its full-time adult tutoring services. The performance of students is given much greater attention with much more safety nets to assist each student with their journey through high school and into college. As a result, it is not a surprise that student performance is much higher than average.

Eanes Independent School District: Eanes Independent School District appears to contain a similar approach towards ensuring student progression as Stevenson High School District. One interesting aspect is the continuous reassessment of “social, emotional, and behavior” when devising strategies to assist students with any difficulties observed. Emotional health (in addition to academic performance) is a large priority that likely integrates into the overall wellbeing of its students. The district places careful consideration into the development of its instructional and operational goals while providing details outlines of how it intends on achieving its goals.

Lower Kuskokwim School District: Compared to other school districts, finding performance data tracking information on the Lower Kuskokwim School District is not as readily available. According to a news report, the district managed to increase its graduation rates by 11% over two

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<sup>337</sup> NCES - LKSD. "District Detail for Lower Kuskokwim School District." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a Part of the U.S. Department of Education. Accessed January 12, 2021. <[https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district\\_detail.asp?ID2=0200001](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?ID2=0200001)>.

and a half years starting in 2016. According to the district's assistance superintendent, it managed to achieve performance results by "establishing outcomes of student performance as the starting point and then building plans to go with that. It's a systems-based approach, so it's constantly looking at data and then making adjustments in the plan to get to those student outcomes."<sup>338</sup> Although these claims are technically substantiated by improving graduation rates, there is a lack of available information that details how the school undergoes its performance improvements. Aside from the news article providing an interview of how its new system works, there is little detail openly available about how in depth the system is or the metrics it uses to track student performance. Nonetheless, the school is making positive corrections to determine methods of suitability to help its student body.

#### *Accountability for Results*

Adlai E. Stevenson High School District: Stevenson High School District appears to have made corrective decisions in the past that perpetuate its current success. Even if corrective actions were necessary to improve the school's performance, it seems unnecessary based on the flawless operation of the school during its most recent academic year. The quality of graduates on an annual basis continue to project above average performance when compared to national averages.

Eanes Independent School District: Eanes Independent School District is another successful example of a school district that that continually made improvements towards bolstering improvement as required. Similar to Stevenson High School District, corrective actions towards fixing discrepancies has placed it as a top performing district. As reported by the district, the needs of its students are reviewed regularly along with appropriate strategies that dictate desired outcomes.

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<sup>338</sup> Trudeau, Christine. "LKSD Graduation Rates May Be Up As High As 11 Percent From Last Year." KYUK | Public Media for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Last modified August 30, 2018. <<https://www.kyuk.org/post/lksd-graduation-rates-may-be-high-11-percent-last-year>>.

Lower Kuskokwim School District: Aside from a local news interview with Lower Kuskokwim School District's Assistant Superintendent, there is not a clear nor official source about how the district goes about its decision-making process. The interview discusses strategies towards raising graduation rates, however, it would be quite beneficial to incorporate official publications on improving its low literacy rates and the proficiency on mathematics. Overall, the district should have greater transparency with publishing its ongoing strategies with helping its students.

### **Case Study Concluding Analysis**

Despite the number of unknown factors that have not been accounted for, we can draw several conclusions based on the data retrieved among the three case studies. First, “excessive” funding above the national average on student spending does not guarantee desired performance metrics. Second, familial and local community support appears to have strong correlation to the performance of individual students. Third, it is vitally important for a district to have solid goals, plans, and a process for effective execution to facilitate the necessary steps to assist students with improving.

Throwing excessive funding at education is not a feasible solution nor does it guarantee a change in academic aptitude. Funding is important for establishing baseline necessities. This can include the assurance of serviceable facilities, updated curriculum and materials, extracurricular activities, and baseline maintenance services. Aside from meeting the essential needs of a school, careful planning should be required before receiving additional funding. As discussed in previous chapters, wasteful expenditure of government funding can detract from a district's underlying goals. Creating a system of checks and balances through voting, similar to Eanes Independent School District, would likely decrease unnecessary usage of state and federal funding. More importantly, it

empowers local leaders to voice their concerns on matters they would have greater familiarity with; opposed to the knowledge and concern of federal and state leadership.

Stevenson High School District and Eanes Independent School District reported much greater integration of utilizing local community members to assist students struggling with academics. The Lower Kuskokwim School District does not appear to have a similar relationship with members of its local community. It is possible that a relationship between the district and local community does exist, however, there is very little information provided when compared to the Eanes and Stevenson districts. The socioeconomic status of the local community must be accounted for when determining why there is less support from Lower Kuskokwim School District Community. It is possible that members of the community do not have the means to dedicate additional time towards helping students. As a result, a disparity is realized when comparing districts with varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Lastly, the Lower Kuskokwim School District may not have programs in place that facilitate the use of the local community to support its students.

The greatest concern for internal progression must begin with local district leadership. It is very unlikely that individual states nor the federal government will care about local districts as much as the local district. Larger states with millions of citizens may not have the capacity nor concern for local communities nor is it likely that additional efforts be given to hold local communities accountable. Under this assumption, for the sake of larger states (states with over a population of one million), state governments should empower its local counties to allow local officials to self-manage its school districts. In states like Hawaii, as mentioned earlier, this system is not in place likely due to geographical size and the population of students actively enrolled within public schools.

Empowerment at the local level must exist if we expect school districts to improve. The bureaucratic nature of state and federal governments often impede progression in a timely fashion. Districts located within affluent areas often spend well above the national average backed by a



supporting community that employs a series of safety nets to minimize the number of struggling students. Lower-income areas do not have these resources even if higher funding is given. Assisting lower-income areas would therefore require additional resources to bridge the performance gap when compared to affluent school districts.

### **Conclusion**

The case studies from this chapter provide a cursory glance of over and underachieving schools in differing geographical regions of the United States. Based on the data, it is obvious that schools with the highest performing students are not surprisingly located in affluent socioeconomic locations without obstacles that tend to be much more pronounced in other regions of the United States. As stated, these obstacles may include language barriers, states with higher than average depression rates, and areas with lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Districts required to overcome the adverse effects of these obstacles becomes an enormous task when coupled with carrying out the primary responsibility of a school district- educating its students to the fullest extent. If schools happen to be located in states with antiquated policies that previously promoted inequity among students, it becomes even more challenging to breakout of discriminatory mindsets. Transitioning from the present mindset (in certain regions) that plagues individual districts which shall require a durable shift towards how education is viewed as the individual level. If local governments can obtain local community involvement, eliminate inequitable mindsets, and have strong planning framework as a guiding source then it will observe a positive trend in student performance regardless of state and federal involvement. If the federal government provided greater empowerment for local districts with respect to accepting or rejecting ineffective curriculum, such as Common Core, it is likely that a significant drop in performance would not have happened.

## CHAPTER 5

### THESIS CONCLUSION

#### Overview

A simple solution does not exist with addressing the regression of student performance with respect to federal, state, and local policy. While it can be challenging to narrow down the root causes of ineptitude and declining standards, it is of the utmost importance that continual policy revisions are made until academic standards are achieved. Unfortunately, one of the greatest limitations when addressing education policy is the limited amount of time to determine the most effective means of legislation. Research on annual student progression backed by statistics may be indicative of short-term effects, however, it is likely that policy will change before long-term effects are determined. Regardless, the research conducted on racial equality, efficient spending, and the importance of empowering community leadership at the local level provide insight on how the United States can facilitate academic progression. Several lessons can be drawn from the preceding analysis regarding the next steps towards enhancing student performance.

#### *Summary of Findings*

Educational federalism is on a consistently shifting “parabola” that wavers between centralized and decentralized education policy. As noted, this continuous shift cannot be associated with any specific political party nor is it accurate to predict how a presidential administration will address education policy. Other considerations stem from current events that often play an important role with policy development. These considerations include the preservation of democracy, nationalistic tendencies, and the pursuit of civil rights. Based on these three areas, recommendations can be made (and are covered in the next section) regarding the suitability when

the federal government intervenes if performance standards are not met. As stated, the application of “blanket standards” such as “Common Core”, was terribly ineffective and hindered student progression. Additional intervention outside of these three areas may be appropriate when defining education objectives at the federal level. To clarify, the research suggests that intervention by the federal government should not encompass the same consequences observed under NCLB. Creating a standardized baseline of objectives predicated on: readiness to learn, teacher quality, curriculum, and funding should drive future policy changes. Simultaneously, the research suggests that the development of standards must account for equal opportunities that do not discriminate students on race or background. Aside from broad mandates involving the development of standards, the preservation of equal opportunities, and the passage of education budgets, the federal government should have a minimized role with the execution of education practices. Education is a shared responsibility between the state and local community and does not require excessive curriculum changes pushed by federal legislators.

State governments tend to have unpredictable tendencies when compared to one another. This can include spending per student, antiquated policies, views on civil rights, and regional considerations. As a result, policy development may or may not serve as a limiting factor when predicting the success of its students. Three durable policy shifts that have drastically influenced the political landscape at the state level are be classified as pre-*No Child Left Behind*, *No Child Left Behind*, and the recent passage of *Every Student Succeeds Act*. As reviewed previously in this thesis, the effects and mandates from NCLB contained the most “centralized” era of education policy. As the federal role drastically increased, many states nearly suffered from dire consequences that threatened the availability of federal funding. Because each state has remarkable differences and unique obstacles, federal micro-management is highly unlikely to serve as a feasible solution; nor should it even be considered an option altogether. The responsibility of fiscal management and the advancement of

outdated policy should be left to individual state governments. Academic standards should be developed at the state level with minimized input from the federal government. If academic standards are imposed at the federal level, or if the federal government influences the final outcome of education standards, the stoppage of funding should not be a consequence.

Local governments are much more likely to have distinctive characteristics that often portray a much more diverse political landscape when compared to state governments. This can become an obstacle when determining solutions to address underperforming districts that are required to deal with language barriers, minimized funding, and any adverse regional variables exclusive to an area. The research conducted on local districts and its corresponding government indicates that excessive funding does not guarantee results. Greater emphasis must be placed upon the local community to provide a support network to safeguard “at-risk” students from falling behind. Lastly, greater opportunities should be available for local leadership to have the necessary empowerment to create, develop, and impose changes when addressing deficiencies rooted within ineffective policies.

### *Recommendations*

Along with the frequently utilized “carrot and stick” strategies, the utilization of hard and soft power approaches are usefully identified as the types of changes that can be implemented within varying levels of government. The use of hard or soft powers may possibly steer progression based on performance. For the sake of this discussion, we can assume that federal and state governments contain the capability to truly influence “hard powers”, that is, policy adjustment and corresponding legislation. If local communities are presently required to use “soft powers” to instigate change purely based on the inability of affecting hard powers (policy), then transferring greater influence of available hard powers to lower levels of government may not only be attainable, but also feasible.

It is inevitable that federal government involvement leads down a path of overly-bureaucratic processes that impede timely progression. With this in mind, the federal government should have the smallest role in education policy by giving the bulk of education policy to individual states and its respective school districts. The federal government should concern itself with macro-changes that involve nationwide education budget allotments and any corresponding issues suitable for blanket responses. This can include changes based on current events to include the passage of NDEA during the 1950s and addressing civil rights stemming from the results of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Aside from massive reform that effects each state, individual states should spearhead its own curriculum and programs suitable for its residents. The effects of *No Child Left Behind* can arguably be classified as “hard power”, based its relatively aggressive approach towards granting excessive power to the federal government and undermined prospects of improvement at state and local levels. It also threatened to deprive states of federal aid designated to help public school districts. In theory, the incorporation of an unconventional style of governance that results with empowerment to local and state leaders would probably have far more superior effects than policy that overly empowers the federal government.

State governments should have more power than the federal government over how education is conducted within state lines. Shifting away from *No Child Left Behind* and into *Every Student Succeeds Act* can easily be construed as steps in the right direction. Enhancing the policy can result from state leadership improving the abilities of its local leaders by facilitating collaboration when developing policy, curriculum, and standards. One of the ongoing issues observed from *A Nation at Risk* was the lack of participation of teachers and scholars providing input to determine newer editions of textbooks for students. If state leadership had the power to control education within its jurisdiction and incorporated input from the lower levels of hierarchy, there would likely be a durable shift into a newer era of positive policy reform. The voice of teachers that interact with

students on a regular basis tends to go unnoticed purely because of how little influence teachers can project towards those that hold “hard power” capabilities.

Support from the state and federal government with granting greater “power” to local district leadership when addressing internal problems would serve as an ideal solution. One example may include that if local district leaders and community members felt that students were not meeting standards even under Common Core guidelines, mechanisms should be in place to allow for deviation from federal mandates. One parent that co-authored Common Core was disgruntled that his students were not learning efficiently under Common Core curriculum.<sup>339</sup> Unfortunately, local district leaders are often unable to make corrective actions nor impose drastic changes that would help the student population. Nonetheless, there are recommendations outside of policy development that would likely assist school district employees with strengthening academic performance through the employment of “soft power” initiatives. Although this may not be feasible within every district, it would likely go a long way to request support from parents or guardians of students that have the ability to support school safety nets. These safety nets can include the offering of tutoring services or volunteering with extracurricular activities intended to assist “at-risk” students from falling behind. These support networks appear to be “common” within top performing districts. In areas with lower socioeconomic resources, however, state intervention may be an important possibility to adjust for possible inequalities in capability.

Another solution that may result with stronger performing students include the redevelopment of instructional and operational goals to refine benchmarks utilized to measure progress. Performance based tracking from the aforementioned “performance management” system would redefine goals, resource alignment, performance data, and the accountability of results

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<sup>339</sup> Garland, Sarah. "The Man Behind Common Core Math." NPR.org. Last modified December 29, 2014. <<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/12/29/371918272/the-man-behind-common-core-math>>.

required to achieve intended progression. This isn't to claim that these metrics and plans aren't in place (they are), it is clearly not as effective as it can be if underperforming has become the trend. Lastly, a more "unconventional" approach may include the matching of student personality types to teacher personality types. This is not a suitable blanket approach for smaller districts with a limited number of teachers, however, larger school districts may find success if students with "more assertive" personalities were matched with teachers that shared the temperament. These recommendations fall outside of this thesis' scope (racial equality, efficient spending, and empowerment at the local level), however, the nature of school districts instituting changes with policy is not a likely outcome. It is probable that methodologies towards mitigating obstacles are rooted with unconventional strategies purely because of limited resources with instigating change.

### *Implications*

It is unlikely for the federal government to willingly minimize its relative power with education policy. This may not be the case with future presidential administrations. As observed under President Bush when compared to President Obama, the power for accountability and internal management was primarily transferred back to individual states in December 2015. Perhaps if individual states were to prove that self-governance was more effective than educational federalism, future policy measures would enhance the roles of individual states with potentially greater oversight given to local districts. Unfortunately, it is also possible that states regress with performance standards thus restarting the cycle of policy transfer back to the federal level. NCLB was more or less a reactionary decision to combat a failing education system. The unfortunate mistake was failing address concerns published in *A Nation At Risk*, as referenced earlier.

With Alabama as an example, states should not have the ability to revise its constitution if it fails to agree with federal mandates with respect to civil rights or any policies that impede the rights

of citizens. This should not be an issue nor should it need to be addressed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, Sumter County, Alabama did not have its first racially integrated school until 2018. It is inexcusable that the federal government failed to address the lack of racial equality that has lingered throughout Alabama. Another potential issue is the unwillingness of state leadership to incorporate suggestions from local teachers or faculty members when devising academic materials for student use. These concerns are not original as it was discussed within *A Nation at Risk*.

The utilization of local community members to step forward and assist with student progression may be a difficult task; especially if the district is located within a community with lower socioeconomic capabilities. Additionally, if school districts are required to expand its role to the community during pandemics and natural disasters, its primary functions may fall to the wayside. The recent closure of schools in response to the Covid-19 outbreak led to schools providing food for local communities with emphasis on lower-income neighborhoods.<sup>340</sup> These mechanisms are fantastic and can truly aid when needed, however, it can negatively impact students if the focus is drawn from the primary function of the school. This becomes more of an issue when students are forced to use distance learning tools thus placing an additional financial burden on districts to ensure accommodations are made for required equipment. Aside from the impacts that affect schools from primary responsibilities, families within the community may not always be available to serve as safety nets. Hopefully these recent experiences will force all three levels of government to unify with local communities to create significant improvements for U.S. education policy.

Families with financial difficulties may not have the same amount of time as families in affluent districts to provide volunteer services. The two top performing school districts examined through case studies indicate their locations as affluent and well supported by the local community.

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<sup>340</sup> Turner, Cory. "Children Are Going Hungry: Why Schools Are Struggling To Feed Students." NPR. Last modified September 8, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/08/908442609/children-are-going-hungry-why-schools-are-struggling-to-feed-students>.



In fact, further research on the style and type of tutoring provided by the school district may be an advantageous research topic to further advance public education systems when supporting “at risk” students. Support systems are definitely not the case in every school district thus an implication of availability tends to arise. This issue can manifest itself into other problems. If parents or guardians are unable to remain in the same school district because of variables outside of their control; such as rising housing prices and limited financial growth, students may be forced to transfer to other schools more often than peers from affluent backgrounds. Although this thesis does not contain data supporting the academic achievement of students subjected to constant transfers, it can become a problem that has likely affected pupils in the past. As referenced in the third chapter, affluent areas in Kansas have the ability to tax themselves much more heavily to spend more than districts located in lower income areas. Should the federal government bridge the gap- and if so, should there be a limit in place to prevent excessive funding from reaching a certain amount? These questions are difficult to answer and are outside the scope of this thesis yet need to be addressed.

Another problem with developing communities to place stronger emphasis on education can be defined by the degree of “intervention” imposed by federal governance. How should the government intervene with local communities to support a culture change that values the importance of education and the importance of a supportive community? Should the federal government intervene if school districts refuse to teach “hot-button issues”? If schools refuse to teach certain subjects, should they be penalized by receiving less funding than cooperative schools? Does a trigger need to be in place if these types of incidents happen? Other concerns remain if greater power was given to lower levels of government. If local leaders had a much larger role with the trajectory of education policy, what checks in place would prevent misguided legislation from being passed? The federal government is expected to intervene with the bottom 5% of schools

under ESSA. Are these bottom performers given the opportunity to address their shortcomings?

### *Final Thoughts*

The growth of progression would likely benefit if all three levels of government worked towards achieving greater collaboration with goals, objectives, and plans. This extends to include incorporating the insight and opinions of educators at the local level when developing academic materials and standards. It is not surprising that the local government has the least amount of influence when developing these much-needed changes.

Despite the inability of the average American to direct hard power changes at the state and federal levels, the utilization of soft power influence at the local level can still lead to stronger community development and involvement. School districts can often be placed into dire situations without any sort of notice. This was observed during the recent pandemic and can often take place during regions around the United States that are struck with natural disasters. Strengthening the relationship between the local community and individual school districts can ease the burden when school districts are expected to expand its role during emergencies. When schools are capable of returning to normal operating standards, the continuation of local support can go a long way towards helping students navigate the obstacles of public education. Until policies at the state and federal level are designed towards maximizing resources, greater emphasis must be placed on developing communities to foster supportive learning environments.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

**Captain David A. Gupton, United States Air Force**

### **Education**

Community College of the Air Force – A.A.S. in Aircrew Safety Systems Technology (2012)

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – B.S. in Aeronautics (2015)

The Johns Hopkins University – M.A. in Government (2021)

### **Military Education**

U.S. Air Force Basic Military Training (2010)

U.S. Air Force Aircrew Flight Equipment Technical Training (2011)

Airman Leadership School (2014)

Officer Training School (2016)

Initial Flight Training (2016)

Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (2017)

C-130H Pilot Initial Qualification Training (2018)

SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) School (2018)

EC-130H Pilot Initial Qualification Training (2018)

### **Experience**

**EC-130H Pilot & OIC Plans & Exercises**, 41 Electronic Combat Squadron,  
Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ (Present)

**Student Pilot**, 47 Student Squadron,  
Laughlin AFB, TX (2016-2018)

**NCOIC In-Shop Section**, 57 Adversary Tactics Support Squadron,  
Nellis AFB, NV (2011-2015)